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John Davies

THE

WORKS

Of the late

Reverend and Learned

Mr. *Joseph Stennett*:

In FIVE VOLUMES.

To which is prefix'd

Some ACCOUNT *of his* LIFE.

VOL. I.

Containing those SERMONS which were publish'd by himself.

LONDON:

Printed for J. DARBY, D. MIDWINTER and A. WARD, J. OSBORN and T. LONGMAN, J. NOON, F. CLAY, J. COX, R. FORD, R. HETT, and J. GRAY.

M.DCC.XXXII.

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SEMINARY

PREFACE.

THE Works of Mr. STENNETT *are properly, in the title page, ſaid to be in* five Volumes; *tho four only were ſubſcribed for, and are now printed in a ſet: becauſe his* Anſwer to Mr. Ruſſen's book upon baptiſm *makes up the fifth volume; which was indeed publiſhed many years ſince; but the edition being ſo large (conſiſting of ſeveral thouſands) that a ſufficient number remain unſold, it may be had at an eaſy price, ſeparate from the other four.*

As to the four volumes which are now printed, the firſt of them contains all thoſe ſermons *which were before publiſhed by himſelf, and have already met with ſo good an acceptance in the world, that nothing more need be ſaid of them in this place.*

The ſecond and third volumes are a collection of ſuch ſermons *as were taken in ſhort-hand from his mouth, as he delivered them: excepting that in the ſecond volume the* Reformation Sermon *is taken from his own manuſcript, the application being publiſhed in that brief manner in which he had committed it to writing, whereas in the delivery it was much*

larger; *and the* ſermons *on* Phil. ii. 2. *and* Tit. i. 5. *had his emendations in ſome of the firſt pages. The other* ſermons *in theſe volumes, tho they would have appeared much more to advantage, had they been reviſed by the author, may however be depended upon as his own; many of them being printed from a collation of copies, taken as he ſpoke them, by two different hands. If the language may not always appear ſo correct, as what he wrote himſelf; yet that ſpirit of piety which they all breathe, will doubtleſs recommend them to perſons of a like taſte. And when it is conſidered, that in his preparations for the pulpit* he uſed only to write ſhort hints of the heads of diſcourſe, and references to texts of ſcripture, and that he committed things, not words to memory[a]; *every candid reader will rather admire that the ſtyle is ſo correct, and the ſermons attended with ſo few digreſſions, than be diſpleaſed to find them not in all reſpects ſo exact as thoſe in the firſt volume.*

The fourth volume contains his poems; *as well all thoſe which had before been publiſhed by himſelf, as ſuch others which at this diſtance of time could be recovered, and were any ways fitted to ſee the light. The collection had been conſiderably larger than it is, if either the author had given the laſt hand to ſeveral of his pieces, or all thoſe which were finiſhed by*

[a] *Vid.* Account of his life, *pag.* 12.

him

him had been preſerved. But ſeveral of his papers, lodged in the hands of friends, are loſt; and it was judged proper to ſuppreſs others, which were left imperfect. Nor is it pretended, that all thoſe which are now preſented to the public are of equal value; many of them being the product of his younger years, which, 'tis preſumed, may be eaſily diſtinguiſhed, tho they are not printed in order of time. And perhaps it may afford ſome pleaſure to obſerve the gradual riſe and improvements of a good genius.

It is to be lamented, that ſome of his beſt diſcourſes were neither committed to writing by himſelf, nor tranſcribed by thoſe who uſually wrote after him. That we have them not under his own hand is indeed no wonder, from what has been ſaid already. Beſides, as the fatigue of writing them down after he had delivered them, conſidering the multiplicity of his other engagements, was more than he could bear; ſo he was much more zealous to do good in the courſe of his preaching, than deſirous of honour: and the hand, to which we are indebted for a great part of thoſe in the ſecond and third volumes, is unhappily diſabled from that and other uſeful ſervices.

'Tis owing to the death of many of his intimate friends, and the loſs of ſome of his papers, that the memoirs of his life are ſo ſhort and imperfect. But under theſe diſadvantages, it was thought better to preſent them as they are,

are, than to affirm any thing without ſufficient grounds.

It may not be amiſs here to inform the public, that altho Mr. Stennett's Anſwer to Ruſſen *is ſo printed in an octavo form, that it will very well ſuit with the four volumes now publiſhed; yet as it is in a ſmaller character, ſhould encouragement be given for reprinting it on the ſame letter and paper with theſe, it may ſtill be done.*

ERRATA in Vol. I.

Page 202. line 21. for *it to* read *to it.*
317. l. ult. dele *that.*
335. l. 22. r. *parliaments.*
406. l. 26. r. *ennoble.*
421. l. 11. r. *examples.*

Vol. II.

Page 102. line 24. read *he may not be.*
416. l. 27. for *unconcerned* r. *unconvinced.*

Vol. III.

Page 70. line 18. read *infallibility.*
218. l. 18, 20. tranſpoſe *happineſs* and *employment.*
294. l. 1. r. *withal.*
295. l. 8. r. *bleſſed are the men.*

Vol. IV.

Page 229. l. 9. for *brow* r. *bow.*

SOME

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SOME

ACCOUNT

OF THE

LIFE

Of the Reverend and Learned

Mr. *Joseph Stennett.*

MR. JOSEPH STENNETT was born in the year 1663, at Abingdon in the county of Berks. His father, Mr. EDWARD STENNETT, descended from a family of good account in Lincolnshire. His mother's name was QUELCH, whose parents were of good repute in the city of Oxford. They were both very pious and worthy persons, and justly deserved the character given them in the epitaph inscribed on their tomb at Wal-

lingford, which was compoſed by their ſon, and is inſerted among his printed poems.

The part Mr. Edward Stennett took in the civil wars, being on the ſide of the Parliament, expoſed him to the neglect of his relations: and afterwards to many difficulties. He was a faithful and laborious miniſter: but his diſſent from the eſtabliſhed church depriving him of the means whereby to maintain his family, which was large, he applied himſelf to the ſtudy of phyſic; by the practice of which he was enabled to breed up his children, and to give them a liberal education, notwithſtanding he bore a conſiderable ſhare of the perſecution which the Diſſenters underwent at that time. While I ſpeak of his ſufferings, it may not be amiſs to preſerve an account of one very extraordinary deliverance he met with, and which I have often heard his ſon relate in the following manner.

He dwelt in the caſtle of Wallingford, a place where no warrant could make forcible entrance, but that of a Lord Chief Juſtice: and the houſe was ſo ſituated, that aſſemblies could meet, and every part of religious worſhip be exerciſed in it, without any danger of a legal conviction; unleſs informers were admitted, which care was taken to prevent: ſo that for a long time he kept a conſtant and undiſturb'd meeting in his hall. A gentleman who was in the commiſſion of

the

the peace, and his very near neighbour, being highly incenſed at the continuance of an aſſembly of this kind ſo near him; after having made ſeveral fruitleſs attempts to get his emiſſaries admitted into the houſe in order to a conviction, in the rage of diſappointment reſolved, together with a neighbouring clergyman, upon doing it by ſubornation of witneſſes. They accordingly hired ſome perſons fit for their purpoſe, to ſwear they had been at thoſe aſſemblies, and heard prayer and preaching there, tho they had never been in the houſe on thoſe occaſions. The clergyman's conduct in this affair was the more cenſured, becauſe he had profeſſed a great friendſhip for Mr. Stennett, and was under conſiderable obligations to him; having often had his aſſiſtance in the way of his profeſſion, as a phyſician, for his family, without any reward. Mr. Stennett finding an indictment was laid againſt him on the Conventicle Act, founded upon the oaths of ſeveral witneſſes, and being well aſſured that nothing but perjury could ſupport it, was reſolved to traverſe it, and accordingly did ſo. The aſſizes were held at Newbury; and when the time drew near, there was great triumph in the ſucceſs theſe gentlemen propoſed to themſelves: when on a ſudden the ſcene was changed; news came to the Juſtice, that his ſon, whom he had lately placed at Oxford, was gone off with a player: the concern whereof, and the ri-

ding in ſearch of him, prevented his attendance in the court. The clergyman, a few days before the aſſizes, boaſted much of the ſervice which would be done to the Church and the neighbourhood by this proſecution, and of his own determination to be at Newbury to help carry it on: but to the ſurprize of many, his deſign was fruſtrated by ſudden death. One of the witneſſes, who lived at Cromiſh, was alſo prevented by being ſeized with a violent and ſad diſeaſe, of which he died. Another of them fell down and broke his leg, and ſo was hindred. In ſhort, of ſeven or eight perſons engaged in this wicked deſign, there was but one left who was capable of appearing: he was a gardiner, who had been frequently employed by Mr. Stennett at day-labour, but never lodged in his houſe, nor was admitted to the religious aſſemblies held there. They thought to make him, as he was a ſervant to the family, a very material evidence; and kept him in liquor for ſeveral days to that purpoſe. But coming to his reaſon juſt as the aſſizes drew on, he went about the town, exclaiming againſt himſelf for his ingratitude and perjury, as well as againſt thoſe who had employed him; and abſolutely refuſed to go. So that when Mr. Stennett came to Newbury, neither proſecutor nor witneſs appearing againſt him, he was diſcharged of courſe.

Mr.

Mr. Edward Stennett had ſeveral ſons and one daughter, beſides thoſe who died young. His eldeſt ſon, Jehudah, afterwards an eminent phyſician at Henley upon Thames, wrote an Hebrew grammar at nineteen years of age; which was printed, and well received by the public. Another of his ſons, Benjamin, proved a valuable and uſeful miniſter; but died young. His daughter, chiefly by the inſtructions of her brother Joſeph, acquired ſuch ſkill in the Greek and Hebrew languages, as to conſult the Scriptures in their originals with eaſe and pleaſure. She was an excellent woman, and married to a worthy gentleman, Mr. William Morton, of Knaphill, in the county of Bucks.

But of all Mr. Stennett's children none made ſuch a proficiency in literature as his ſecond ſon Joſeph, or gave greater proofs of a ſerious regard to religion. Being trained up in a family, where there was ſo much genuine and undiſſembled piety, with the bleſſing of God upon his father's miniſtry, he became a happy inſtance of that early converſion, which in ſome of his printed diſcourſes he has ſo well recommended to others.

What an early and juſt ſenſe he had of the advantages of ſuch an education, appears from the following paſſage, written when he was very young, and found among his papers ſince his death: "O "God of my ſalvation, how abundant was

" thy goodneſs! O invaluable mercy! thou
" didſt ſeaſon my tender years with a reli-
" gious education; ſo that I ſucked in the
" rudiments of chriſtianity as it were with
" my mother's milk, by the gracious admo-
" nitions and holy diſcipline of my godly
" parents. This was an antidote ſent from
" heaven againſt the corroding poiſon of
" ſin: this made conſcience ſpeak, while my
" childiſh tongue could but ſtammer: this
" is a branch of thy divine bounty and
" goodneſs, for which my ſoul ſhall for
" ever bleſs thee."

Having finiſhed his grammar learning at the public ſchool in Wallingford, he ſoon maſtered the French and Italian languages; became a critic in the Hebrew, and other oriental tongues; ſucceſsfully ſtudied the liberal ſciences, and made a conſiderable proficiency in philoſophy. And it was with an early view to uſefulneſs in the character of a divine, that all his diligent application to his ſtudies tended. As to divinity, tho he carefully read the Fathers of the firſt ages, and impartially examined and conſidered the moſt celebrated ſchemes which later times have produced: tho he paid a due deference to the works of thoſe, who have learnedly and judiciouſly laboured to remove the difficulties objected to our holy religion: and tho he was willing to receive light wherever it was to be found; being fond of no opinion, either for its novelty or

 antiquity,

antiquity, if it did not appear to be true; nor aſhamed of any notion in religion, becauſe it was grown out of faſhion: yet I have often heard him ſay with pleaſure, that he was the better ſatisfied with his principles, becauſe they were formed on a diligent and impartial ſtudy of the holy ſcriptures themſelves. Theſe indeed were his conſtant ſtudy from a child: and how he profited in them, ſufficiently appears by his works.

He came to London in the year 1685, and for the firſt five years employed himſelf in the inſtruction and education of youth. And being now ſenſible that it was time to ſtudy men as well as books, he endeavoured to cultivate an acquaintance with ſeveral perſons eminent for their piety, good ſenſe, and learning: and nature had ſo well furniſhed him with a capacity of pleaſing in converſation, that he ſeldom failed of recommending himſelf to men of that character.

He was bred up with a true ſenſe of the value of Engliſh liberty; and had very early felt the ſmart of perſecution, having in the reign of King Charles II. attended his father a conſiderable time in priſon for the cauſe of conſcience and religion. About this time therefore he wrote ſeveral witty pieces, eſpecially in poetry, which were publiſhed, and tended to encourage the ſpirit of liberty in the people. They were much taken

taken notice of, but never wore his name. It is well known, that by the artful management of the court, ſeveral well-meaning perſons among the Baptiſts, as well as of the other denominations of Diſſenters, were prevailed on to compliment King James on his declaration for liberty of conſcience. Mr. Stennett, young as he was, underſtood the lure; and was greatly concerned for thoſe who were led into the ſnare, but moſt of all for the danger this compliance threatned to our conſtitution. On this occaſion therefore he rallied the conduct of his honeſt, tho beguiled friends, in a very keen and witty copy of verſes; which he took care ſhould be dropt amongſt them where they uſually met, ſo as to come ſafe to their hands, and theirs only: and it was not without its effect. He is ſaid likewiſe to have been the author of ſome of the *Poems on ſtate-affairs*, which had been printed privately, and were collected together juſt after the Revolution: but which they were, is uncertain.

In the year 1688 he was married to Mrs. Suſanna Gill, daughter of George Gill Eſq; an eminent French merchant; who at the time of the revocation of the edict of Nants had left his native country, and a very conſiderable eſtate there, for the ſake of religion. Mr. Gill's elder daughter was married to the reverend Mr. Daniel Williams,

Williams, afterwards Dr. Williams, who proved a generous friend to Mr. Stennett.

By the earneſt ſolicitations of his friends being about this time prevailed on to appear in the pulpit, he was ſoon taken notice of, eſpecially at an evening-lecture which he preached in Devonſhire-ſquare. The congregation which obſerved the ſeventh day, meeting then at that place, and afterwards at Pinners-hall, had been for ſome time deprived of their worthy paſtor, the pious and learned Mr. Francis Bampfeild; who after various ſufferings and many years confinement died a priſoner for the ſake of a good conſcience. This people ſoon fixed their eyes upon Mr. Stennett as a proper ſucceſſor to ſo excellent a perſon. Another ſituation might have been more to his temporal advantage, and there were not wanting offers of that kind; yet he preferred the invitation of this ſmall people, by reaſon of his agreement with them in principles: accordingly he was ordained their paſtor the fourth of March 1690; and tho they were able to do but little towards the ſupport of his family, which proved numerous, yet no temptation could ever prevail on him to leave them, but he continued their faithful and moſt affectionate paſtor to his dying day. His public labours amongſt them were, as has been ſaid, on the ſeventh day; but he preached

to

to divers other congregations conſtantly on the firſt day.

The manner in which his miniſtry was conducted, ſufficiently diſcovered that he purſued the true ends of it; to convince men of ſin, and lead them to Chriſt for life and ſalvation; to make them truly wiſe, and good, and happy. He laboured induſtriouſly to anſwer theſe great and good ends by the diligent preparations of his ſtudy: and yet thoſe who were neareſt him know, how humbly he would expreſs his ſenſe of the neceſſity of the divine aſſiſtance; and with what holy warmth he would plead with God for the help of his Spirit. The ſubjects of his diſcourſes were well choſen; and the ſkill he ſhewed in handling them will beſt appear from thoſe which are publiſhed. He uſed to bring nothing with him into the pulpit, except ſome ſhort hints of the heads of his diſcourſe, and references to texts of ſcripture; ſo that he committed things only, and not words, to memory: but tho his diction was extemporary, yet it was very eaſy and natural, for he had a great command of the Engliſh language. His voice was low, but ſweet and muſical: and as he ſpoke the true ſenſe of his own heart and experience; ſo the ſuitable air of his countenance, and the agreeableneſs of his addreſs, ſeldom failed of recommending what he ſaid to the attention of judicious hearers. If he entered into a deſcription

tion of the felicity of the heavenly ſtate, ſuch a ſweet ſmile would dwell upon his face, while his melodious tongue gave the beautiful repreſentation, as charmed and captivated the hearts of his audience. And when at the cloſe of a diſcourſe he came to reaſon with ſinners about their unhappy condition, and to ſet before them the generous propoſals of the goſpel, together with the fatal conſequences of their impenitency; he would ſo mix his tears with his expoſtulations, as the affections of but few in the aſſembly could remain unmoved.

His judgment in caſuiſtical divinity, and his large acquaintance with experimental religion, were attended with ſuch a ſweetneſs and tenderneſs of ſpirit, as invited many perſons of afflicted minds and doubting conſciences to apply to him for advice; who always met with a hearty welcom, and ſeldom went away without relief.

His endeavours to reſtore any of his flock, who wander'd out of the ways of religion, were indefatigable: and thoſe labours were managed with ſuch a zeal for God's glory, and ſo apparent a view to their trueſt intereſt, the dignity of his office being always maintained with a moſt affectionate tenderneſs to the ſouls of men; that it muſt be a hardned mind indeed which could continue inſenſible under his reproofs.

He

He paid a ſtrict regard to the ordinances of the New Teſtament, being ſolicitouſly careful therein to keep cloſe to what he believed was the original inſtitution. And as he was well qualified for every part of his office, ſo he ſhined very much in this. Particularly in the adminiſtration of the Lord's ſupper, he ſeldom failed to awaken the moſt proper ſentiments in the minds of the communicants, and command the attention of every ſpectator. His mind was remarkably engaged in that ordinance; which occaſioned the *Hymns* he compoſed for the celebration of it, and which he ſolemnly dedicated to the great Redeemer. In that dedication he ſpoke his very ſoul: and ſome of his friends have heard him ſay more than once, that tho he found it very hard to pleaſe himſelf in any thing he did, yet that compoſition was his favourite ſong.

Some of his leiſure hours were filled up in tranſlating uſeful books out of French into our own language: among which was the Biſhop of Chiapa's *Account of the cruelties of the Spaniards in America*; and *Dacier*'s *Plato*, &c. At other times he diverted himſelf in exerciſing his poetical genius; and, as his friend Mr. Tate, the Poet-laureat, juſtly ſaid of him, *He had the happineſs to be a good poet, without being a ſlave to the Muſes.* Tho he ſometimes employed himſelf and entertained his friends with poems of a pleaſant

ſant and facetious nature; yet he would never let any thing go into the world under his name, but what was of a ſerious kind.

His *Verſion of the Canticles* appeared pretty early: which with his *Sacramental Hymns* raiſed his reputation for divine poeſy; and occaſion'd his being applied to ſome few years after, to reviſe the *Verſion of David's Pſalms* made by that celebrated poet, Sir John Denham. This is the rather mention'd, becauſe when the gentleman, who managed that affair, acquainted Dr. Sharpe, then Archbiſhop of York, with his intention, his Grace was pleaſed to ſay, "He had heard ſuch a character of Mr. Stennett, that he thought no man more fit for "that work than he, not only for his ſkill "in poetry, but likewiſe in the Hebrew "tongue."

In the reign of King William, the diſſenting miniſters of the different denominations in and about London addreſſed the throne on ſeveral occaſions ſeparately. And when the nation congratulated his Majeſty on his deliverance from the Aſſaſſination plot, Mr. Stennett was fixed on by the Baptiſts to draw up their addreſs, which accordingly he did, and preſented it the ninth of April 1696. being introduced by the right honorable the earl of Monmouth, now earl of Peterborow. This addreſs was at that time much taken notice of; for which reaſon I ſhall here give the reader a copy of it, as follows.

To

To the KING's moſt excellent Majeſty,

The humble Addreſs of the Miniſters of the Baptiſt denomination in and about the city of London, in behalf of themſelves and their reſpective congregations.

May it pleaſe your Majeſty,

" AFTER having paid the grateful " tribute of our humble thanks at " the throne of the King of Kings, for " that ſignal favour wherewith his provi- " dence has bleſſed your Majeſty, theſe your " kingdoms, and the whole Proteſtant inte- " reſt abroad, in the ſeaſonable diſcovery " and defeat of the late barbarous conſpi- " racy of the blood-thirſty enemies of " your Majeſty's government and life; a " life highly endear'd to us by the many " ſucceſſive dangers, to which your Majeſty " has ſo generouſly expoſed it in the de- " fenſe of all that's valuable to us; and " by thoſe remarkable inſtances of the " divine protection, by which it has been " as often guarded: we your Majeſty's moſt " loyal and obedient ſubjects, with all be- " coming reſpect, beg leave to congratulate " your Majeſty on this ſo eminent and " happy deliverance.

" And

" And we gladly embrace this occaſion " to aſſure your Majeſty, that as we have " enjoyed a ſhare of the benign influences " of your government, whereby both our " civil and religious liberties have been ſo " happily protected and vindicated; ſo we " ſhall make it our glory (as we account " it our duty) to render your Majeſty the " utmoſt ſervice we are capable of in that " ſphere, wherein the law allows us to move. " And as a farther teſtimony of our fidelity " and affection to your Majeſty's perſon " and government, we chearfully follow " the pattern of the honourable the Houſe " of Commons, in ſubſcribing the Aſſocia- " tion ſubjoined to this our humble ad- " dreſs.

" Nor ſhall we ceaſe to offer our fervent " ſupplications to heaven, that the ſpirit of " wiſdom may continue to direct all your " Majeſty's counſels; that the Lord of hoſts " may ſtill ſucceed your arms; that troops " of aſſociate angels may always guard your " royal perſon; that your Majeſty may " have a long and proſperous reign on " earth, and at length wear a crown of " immortal glory in the kingdom of " heaven. So pray,

Great Sir,

Your Majeſty's moſt loyal
and moſt dutiful
ſubjects and ſervants.

In the year 1698 he was on the point of going to France, to ſolicit the reſtoration of the eſtate of Mr. Gill, his wife's father; who for the ſake of his religion had left behind him the value of 12000 pounds ſterling in lands and buildings, beſides other conſiderable effects. Mr. Gill, upon his coming into England in 1682, had been admitted a gentleman of the Privy-chamber to King Charles II. And the Lord Preſton, the Engliſh embaſſador at the court of France, by his Majeſty's order, had procured a brevet from the French King in Mr. Gill's favour, dated the nineteenth of April 1683, ſign'd Louis, and under written *Colbert:* by which he gave him liberty to live in England with his family without any limitation of time, and to ſerve his Majeſty of Great Britain as gentleman of his Privy-chamber; to which end he freed him from all the ſeverity of his ordinances and declarations. But Mr. Gill's eſtate being afterwards ſeized and alienated, in direct contradiction to this brevet, it was thought proper to try if it could be recovered by the interceſſion of the Lord Jerſey, then embaſſador at that court; to whom Mr. Stennett had very conſiderable recommendations. His handſom addreſs, and ſkill in the French language, induced ſome of his friends to encourage the deſign of his voyage. But many others thinking it too hazardous an affair for him to undertake, he was prevailed

vailed on to deſiſt. And it was happy for him that he did; for ſeveral worthy perſons in that Lord's retinue met with very ill treatment in France.

In the year 1700, being at Tunbridge for the uſe of the waters, after his recovery from a dangerous illneſs, he preached there during the greateſt part of the ſeaſon, to the general ſatisfaction of the audience; which, together with his great intimacy with Mordecai Abbott Eſquire, Receiver-general of the cuſtoms, very much enlarged his acquaintance. That great and good man, who paſſed with ſo much reputation thro' ſeveral conſiderable poſts, and was ſo highly eſteemed by King William, continued in them all a ſtrict Nonconformiſt; and was ſo far from being aſhamed to own thoſe with whom in religious matters he agreed, that he took all opportunities, even before perſons of ſuperior rank, to give Mr. Stennett ſuch marks of his reſpect, as rendered him uneaſy; till he was convinced that Mr. Abbott did it deſignedly, to manifeſt the regard he had for his character. The death of that excellent perſon in the prime of his days, together with the loſs of his own eldeſt daughter at the age of twelve years, whoſe great virtues and underſtanding had much endeared her to him, were ſo ſevere an affliction to Mr. Stennett, as had like to have proved fatal to him.

'Tis no wonder that a perſon of Mr. Stennett's learning and known character had ſo large a ſhare in the management of affairs among the Diſſenters of his own denomination; and that caſes of difficulty relating to that intereſt from all parts of the kingdom, and ſome from remoter climates, came under his care.

About the year 1702, when Mr. David Ruſſen publiſhed his book intitled, *Fundamentals without a foundation, or a true picture of the Anabaptiſts*; Mr. Stennett was prevailed on to anſwer him: which he ſoon did with ſo much learning and ſolid reaſoning, that his antagoniſt never thought fit to make any reply. In this performance he ſhewed himſelf a thorow maſter of the controverſy: and tho he had to do with an adverſary, whoſe plain deſign was to reproach the primitive mode of baptiſm, and to expoſe the characters of thoſe who adhered to it, as well as their principles, and who had ſhewn as little regard to truth as common decency; yet he conducted his anſwer in ſuch a manner, as not to diſcover the leaſt appearance of anger or reſentment throughout the whole work, but all along maintained that eaſy and pleaſant temper, mixed with fine turns of wit, which was ſo natural to him. The character he gained by this piece put his friends on ſoliciting him to undertake a greater work, which had been long wiſhed for, namely, a complete Hiſtory of Baptiſm.

This

This he intended to have performed, and was for ſome years collecting materials for it; but the ill ſtate of his health prevented his making any conſiderable progreſs in it. The large extent and great uſefulneſs of this deſign may in ſome meaſure appear by the following ſcheme, taken from a draught yet remaining in the hands of a friend of Mr. Stennett.

It was propoſed, that next to the Scripture account, a particular collection ſhould be made out of the authentic writers of the firſt, ſecond, and third centuries, of every thing material relating to baptiſm; and a like collection from the authors of the following centuries, down to the time of the Reformation; particular care being taken to examine the books which relate to the antient Petrobuſians, Albigenſes, and Waldenſes: that all thoſe rabbinical books ſhould be ſearched, which give any account of the baptiſm of proſelytes among the Jews; as alſo ſuch chriſtian writers, who argue for or againſt it: that all chriſtian liturgies and councils, antient or modern, ſhould be examined with relation both to the mode and ſubjects of baptiſm: that enquiry ſhould be made into the different ſentiments of Proteſtants about baptiſm at the time of the Reformation, and particularly for a juſt account of the circumſtances of the German and Hungarian Antipædobaptiſts: that all the Engliſh books

which have controverted these points since the Reformation should be consulted, the arguments on both sides drawn out, and remarks made how the writers of the Church of England and those of the Dissenters militate with respect to pædobaptism: that a correspondence should be settled with persons of approved integrity and learning in different parts beyond the seas, to furnish such books and accounts as might give a just idea of the state of the Antipædobaptists abroad: that assistance should be given to the author of the intended History from enquiries made by others in the several periods of it; but that whatever materials were collected by other hands, he should himself examine all the citations, and digest them into such order as he thought fit, making proper reflections throughout the whole work. Such a plan well and judiciously executed would doubtless have set this subject in a very full and just light; and contributed not a little to the removal of those heats and prejudices for the future, which formerly have too often appeared in discourses concerning baptism: so that it may well be esteemed an unhappiness to the public, that he did not live to finish it.

Tho he was naturally averse to disputation, yet he was several times engaged in it, and more than once in a public manner: on which occasions he seldom failed to gain

the eſteem even of his opponents. Inſtances of this might be given in his diſpute with Mr. Penn the Quaker, Capt. Hedworth and Mr. Emms on the Unitarian points, Mr. Leſley the Nonjuror, and ſome among the Romaniſts themſelves. The reverend Mr. William Wall, who had the thanks of the Convocation for his *Hiſtory of Infant baptiſm* (which was afterwards ſo well and learnedly anſwered by Dr. John Gale) converſed with Mr. Stennett ſeveral times on the point of Baptiſm. And in a letter he wrote to him, ſpeaking of ſome alterations, which after a converſation with him, he had made in the ſecond edition of that *Hiſtory:* "Upon "reading over the ſheets, ſays he, I could "wiſh I had reviſed another place or two, "where I mention you; I would, how much "ſoever we differ, have expreſſed ſome-"thing more of reſpect."

When he publiſhed his *Thankſgiving ſermon* for the victory at Hochſtedt, in 1704, it was preſented to Queen Anne by ſome noble hand, without his knowledge. Her Majeſty having read it over, was highly pleaſed with the performance, and ordered him a gratuity out of the Privy-purſe, with her thanks to him. But ſo far was he from affecting popularity, that he concealed this from many of his near friends: and perhaps, if it had not been firſt made known by the gentleman who was ſent on the royal meſſage, very few would ever have heard of it.

When committees of the whole body of the diſſenting miniſters in London were ap-

pointed, he uſually was one; and 'tis well known how far his judgment was regarded among them. He had commonly a conſiderable hand in the addreſſes they made to the government. One which he drew up, met with the general approbation of the body; and was preſented to the Queen at Windſor, June 17, 1706, by the reverend Mr. John Spademan, introduced by the Lord Treaſurer Godolphin. It had the honour to be highly commended by the Lord Chancellor Cowper: and as it was not publiſhed at large in the Gazette, it is thought the more convenient to preſerve it here.

To the QUEEN's moſt excellent Majeſty,

The humble addreſs of the Proteſtant Diſſenting Miniſters of the ſeveral denominations, in and about the cities of London and Weſtminſter.

May it pleaſe your Majeſty,

" THE late ſurpriſing progreſs of your " Majeſty's forces, and thoſe of your " allies in Flanders, under the command of " the moſt illuſtrious Prince the Duke of " Marlborough; and of thoſe in Spain, " commanded by the noble Earls of Peter- " borough and Gallway, happily ſupported " by your royal navy, under the conduct " of your prudent and valiant Admirals, " engages us humbly to congratulate your " Majeſty on ſo glorious an occaſion.

" The

" The ſignal anſwer it has pleaſed God " to return to thoſe devout prayers, which " your Majeſty, and your people by your " direction, addreſſed to heaven, inſpires " us with a joy, equal to the mortification " it gives your enemies. And while your " Majeſty aſcribes your many victories to " the arm of the Almighty, and repeats " your royal commands to your people, to " offer him ſolemn thankſgivings; we can- " not but look on your Majeſty's piety as an " hopeful pledge of the like future ſucceſs.

" As the important conſequences of your " Majeſty's triumphs make a daily acceſſion " to your glory; ſo they give us an agree- " able proſpect of the ſpeedy reduction of " the power of France to its juſt limits, " the reſtitution of liberty and peace to " Europe, the effectual relief of the Re- " formed churches abroad, and the ſecurity " of that proviſion the law has made for a " Proteſtant ſucceſſion to the crown of this " kingdom.

" We gratefully acknowledge the ſhare " we have in the bleſſings of your Majeſty's " auſpicious reign, which preſerves to us " both our civil and religious liberties; and " take this occaſion to renew to your Ma- " jeſty the aſſurance of our inviolable fideli- " ty; to which not only our intereſt and " inclination, but the ſacred ties of grati- " tude and conſcience, oblige us. And we " ſhall uſe our utmoſt endeavours, in our ſe- " veral ſtations, to promote that union and " moderation among your Proteſtant ſubjects,

" ſo

GENTLEMEN,

" AS you have the honour to be cho-
" ſen to repreſent this great city in
" the enſuing Parliament ; ſo 'tis hoped it
" will not be diſagreeable to you to know
" the ſenſe of the generality of your electors
" concerning the preſent poſture of public
" affairs, and after what manner 'tis expec-
" ted you will acquit yourſelves of the
" truſt repoſed in you.

" 'Tis your fortune to be choſen at a
" very critical juncture of time : and the
" auguſt aſſembly, of which you are to be
" a part, will in all appearance have be-
" fore them ſome of the moſt important
" affairs that ever were debated in Parlia-
" ment ; on the prudent management of
" which (under the divine providence) not
" only the happineſs of this city and
" nation, but the welfare of the whole Pro-
" teſtant intereſt, and of the greateſt part
" of Europe depends.

" All the world is convinced of the
" truth of that, which her Majeſty has
" ſo juſtly obſerved ; that the late in-
" ſolent attempt of the Pretender muſt
" needs have been encouraged by ſecret
" enemies of the government here at
" home : and their party appears too con-
" ſiderable to be either deſpiſed, or neg-
" lected ; which renders it highly proba-

" ble

" ble, that a Britiſh Parliament will think " it neceſſary to enquire into the hidden " ſprings of that wicked and bloody deſign; " that by detecting the treaſon of our in- " teſtine enemies, and by bringing the " chief of them to juſtice, the reſt may " not flatter themſelves that they may " commit the blackeſt crimes with impu- " nity; and that their confederates abroad, " by obſerving the ſtrength and ſteddineſs " of the Britiſh government, may be diſ- " couraged from engaging in the like " preſumptuous enterprizes for time to " come.

" We therefore rely on your integrity " and zeal, that when the plot, on which " the intended invaſion was founded, " comes to be examined, you will contri- " bute all you can to the diſcovery of " that treachery, and concur with thoſe " prudent meaſures, which the wiſdom of " the nation ſhall think fit to take for the " ſecurity of her Majeſty's perſon and go- " vernment from ſuch horrid conſpiracies " for the future.

" A ſeaſonable and nice ſcrutiny into " this dark affair will probably bring to " light ſome of the myſterious cauſes of " thoſe uncommon difficulties, under which " the government has ſo much laboured; and " may open a way to ſome proper method " for the revival and ſecurity of trade: " which is an article the repreſentatives of

" this

" this city can never forget, without being " guilty of a negligence and ſupineneſs not " to be forgiven.

" Therefore we cannot omit to charge " you with the neceſſary care of making " in Parliament a full and lively repreſen- " tation of the calamities we have long ſuf- " fered, ſometimes for want of convoys " and cruiſers, ſometimes by their unac- " countable delays, and the unſeaſonable time " of their ſailing, as well as by the undue " preſſing of men out of our merchant " ſhips; by which our trade has been al- " moſt entirely ruined, and her Majeſty's " revenue very much diminiſhed.

" We moreover earneſtly deſire you " would embrace every occaſion, that may " offer in a parliamentary way, to conſo- " lidate the happy Union of England and " Scotland, and to render it as complete " as poſſible: for you cannot be igno- " rant how much the welfare of Great " Britain, and indeed of all Europe, is " concerned in the keeping of that Union " inviolable; and how much the confir- " mation of it will tend to mortify all " thoſe, who wiſh ill to our happy con- " ſtitution.

" And how much ſoever peace is to be " deſired, eſpecially after a long and expen- " ſive war; yet 'tis ſo very evident, that " 'tis impoſſible for the balance of power " in Europe to be preſerved, and the trade

" of

" of this nation to be retrieved, without re-
" ducing the exorbitant power of France
" to juſt limits, and reſtoring the crown
" of Spain to the houſe of Auſtria; that we
" think it much more eligible to bear the
" burden of a juſt and neceſſary war, than
" weakly to fall into the obvious ſnare of
" a diſhonourable and deſtructive peace.
" We hope therefore you will do all that
" becomes our repreſentatives to ſupport
" the glorious cauſe of liberty, in which
" her Majeſty and the nation are engaged,
" till peace can be attained on honourable
" and laſting terms, according to the una-
" nimous reſolution of the late Parlia-
" ment.

" We conclude in aſſuring you, that if
" you are deſirous to oblige us, you can
" do it in nothing ſo much, as in ſhewing
" a forward zeal for the vindication of her
" Majeſty's rightful and lawful title to
" the crown (a title founded on the juſt
" and glorious principles of the late happy
" Revolution) and for the ſecurity of the
" ſucceſſion in the Proteſtant line; and
" in readily complying with all ſuch mea-
" ſures as ſhall be thought proper to pro-
" mote union and moderation among Pro-
" teſtants, and to render them all as eaſy
" to one another, as uſeful to the com-
" munity, and as ſerviceable to the go-
" vernment as poſſible. And all this we
" give you in charge, as you will anſwer

" the

" the neglect of it to God, to your own " conſciences, to her Majeſty, to the na- " tion in general, and in particular to the " city you repreſent.

" And now, Gentlemen, we promiſe " ourſelves that your conſtant attendance " in your places in the Houſe of Com- " mons, your aſſiduous application to the " public buſineſs, and your peculiar regard " to all the important matters we have " recommended to you, will confirm us in " the good opinion we have of your fide- " lity, and the other qualifications neceſſary " to the diſcharge of ſo great a truſt as " that of our civil and religious liberties; " the preſervation and ſecurity of which " we commit to your care."

When the ſcene of affairs altered towards the latter end of the reign of Queen Anne, it happened that a noble friend of Mr. Stennett fell in with the change: and as many addreſſes waited on her Majeſty with congratulations on the peace concluded with France, ſo great endeavours were uſed to engage the Diſſenters to compliment the Queen and her miniſters on this occaſion. And when they could not in their united circumſtances be prevailed on, it was thought proper to try if any of the Denominations ſingly could be brought into thoſe meaſures.

That

That noble Lord, with the aſſiſtance of another noble Peer, was employed to try what could be done with the Baptiſts. Mr. Stennett was preſently ſent for; and it was preſumed that if they gained him, a conſiderable ſtep would be made towards effecting the deſign. Some things were inſinuated to him, which tended to create a diffidence between the Baptiſts and the other bodies of Diſſenters; and he was aſſured at the ſame time, that ſuch an acceptable compliance as this with the expectations of the court from him and his brethren, would bring them highly into the royal eſteem, and ſecure them any favour they could reaſonably expect. But he aſſured their Lordſhips, that neither himſelf nor his brethren could ever be brought to juſtify with their hands, what their hearts diſapproved; and that no particular advantages to themſelves could ever counterbalance their regards to their country.

Robert Harley Eſquire, afterwards Earl of Oxford, attempted at the ſame time with powerful inſinuations to influence Dr. Williams; but met with a brave and ſteddy repulſe. And the Whig Lords deputed a noble Earl, who then bore a principal figure among them, but is ſince dead, to make due acknowledgments for this ſeaſonable ſtand of the Diſſenters.

Mr.

Mr. Stennett had indeed a truly public ſpirit; and was not only continually engaged in promoting the intereſts of religion and the good of his country in his own time, but likewiſe ſolicitouſly concerned for future generations. With this view he induſtriouſly endeavoured to promote ſuch meaſures, as he thought moſt likely to ſupply the churches with a ſucceſſion of uſeful miniſters. It was greatly wiſhed by many, that he could have had leiſure and health enough to employ ſome part of his time in fitting young perſons for this work; for which his piety, learning, and excellent temper ſo abundantly qualified him. But his other public ingagements were more than his bodily ſtrength could well bear, and would not admit of his undertaking ſuch an affair as this. For his conſtitution was naturally weak; and the extraordinary application of his mind to ſtudy in his younger years is thought to have laid the foundation of thoſe diſorders, which attended him all the after part of his life, and deprived the world ſo ſoon of ſuch a valuable bleſſing. However, towards the latter part of his time ſeveral young gentlemen, who were deſigned for the miniſtry, boarded at his houſe, for the advantage of his converſation and direction in their ſtudies; and he failed not in the midſt of all his other engagements to afford them very conſiderable aſſiſtance.

Many

Many young miniſters likewiſe reſorted to him for his advice. And his judgment as a divine was ſo conſiderable, ſuch his knowledge of mankind, and ſerious concern about religion, and ſuch the candour with which he treated them; that it is eaſy to judge of the profit and pleaſure they received by conſulting him. To give one inſtance of his many prudent counſels: he adviſed, that when they propoſed to diſcourſe upon any text of Scripture, they ſhould, after ſeeking the divine aſſiſtance, firſt conſult their own unbiaſſed thoughts, by a cloſe ſtudy of the text itſelf, compared with what goes before or follows after, and with other parts of Scripture relating to it, before they looked into any commentator. By this means, he obſerved, confuſion of thoughts would be avoided, and their minds prepared to judge of the propriety of thoſe explications or illuſtrations, which they ſhould afterwards meet with in the works of learned men; but without ſuch a conduct they would ſeldom be able to ſay or write any thing, which they could juſtly call their own.

In the beginning of the year 1713 his health apparently declined. Many heavy afflictions at that time crouded upon him, which affected him more than ordinary, tho he had been uſed to various trials during the whole courſe of his life, and had a temper of mind fitted for ſuch exerciſes. During his illneſs he loſt his dear friend, the reverend

Mr. John Piggott, with whom he had lived in a conſtant and moſt intimate friendſhip for many years. His *Funeral Sermon*, which has been highly eſteemed by the beſt judges, was the laſt Mr. Stennett preached: in which he has given a juſt character of that valuable perſon. He intended a poem likewiſe to his memory, and made ſome progreſs in it: but his weakneſs, which was followed by his death, prevented his completing it. This piece, unfiniſhed as it was, would probably have been acceptable to the public: but it is unhappily loſt, except a ſmall fragment, printed among his poems.

Being adviſed by his phyſicians to remove into the air, he went to Knaphill in Buckinghamſhire, the houſe of his brother-in-law, Mr. Morton. Here he declined apace: and his honoured friend Dr. Mead being conſulted, who had formerly been exceeding kind and ſerviceable to him in a dangerous diſorder, he ſoon diſcovered by the account ſent him that he was paſt all hope of recovery; which ſoon after proved to be fatally true.

When he drew near his diſſolution, he called his children about him, and in a particular manner gave his dying advice to his eldeſt ſon, with reſpect to the management of his ſtudies, and the conduct of his future life: and having charged upon them all a due obedience to their mother, he preſſed them in a ſpecial manner to a proper concern

for

for their ſouls; declaring to them with the greateſt aſſurance, and a pleaſant ſmile in his countenance, "That if they were found walk-" ing in the ways of true religion, his God " would be their God, to whoſe providence " he could in faith commit them." He likewiſe ſignified to ſeveral about him, in a calm and ſedate manner, a firm and well grounded hope of a bleſſed condition in the eternal world. And to one in particular, who aſked him in what diſpoſition his mind was, under his low ſtate of body, and in the proſpect of his great change: "I re-" joice, ſaid he, in the God of my ſalva-" tion, who is my ſtrength and my God." Thus he gradually ſunk away; and ſlept in the Lord on the eleventh of July 1713, and in the forty ninth year of his age.

His active mind was indeed removed out of a weak and crazy tabernacle, from which it had often groaned for a releaſe; and he left a world of labours, cares, and many ſorrows. But the loſs of a perſon endowed with ſuch valuable accompliſhments, and ſo uſeful to the world, juſt in the maturity of his years, was an unſpeakable affliction to his friends, and greatly lamented by all the lovers of learning and virtue who were acquainted with him; ſeveral of whom came from London and other parts, to attend his body to the grave, in the church-yard of Hitchenden in the county of Bucks, where it waits for the reſurrection of the juſt.

I shall finish this account with the following epitaph to the memory of Mr. Stennett, drawn up by one of his friends.

M. S.

IOSEPHI STENNETT THEOLOGI INSIGNIS
PRAECLARIS ET INGENII ET ERVDITIONIS DOTIBVS ORNATI
QVIBVS ETIAM TANTA PIETAS A PRIMIS ACCESSIT ANNIS
VT VTRVM DOCTIOR AN MELIOR VIR ESSET
AMBIGVVM RELIQVERIT
IN REBVS DIVINIS VERSATISSIMVS
OMNES SACRI MVNERIS PARTES CVRATISSIME PEREGIT
FIDEMQVE CHRISTIANAM CVM VITAE INTEGRITATE CONIVNCTAM
HAVD MINORI DILIGENTIA SVO EXEMPLO EXORNARE CONATVS EST
QVAM STVDIO ET ELOQVENTIA ALIORVM APPROBATIONI
TAM CONCIONIBVS QVAM SCRIPTIS COMMENDARE
MVSAS ETIAM QVAS PIE CASTEQVE COLVIT
AD DIVINI AMORIS LAVDES MAGNIQVE REDEMTORIS SACRA CELEBRAND
EA QUA POLLEBAT ARTE ADHIBVIT
AT NIHIL HVMANVM A SE ALIENVM EXISTIMANS
NEC DE REBVS QVOQVE CIVILIBVS OMNINO CVRAM ABIECIT
SED PROVT OCCASIO POSTVLARET
AVT APVD PRINCIPEM GRATVLANDI CAVSA ORATOREM EGIT
AVT IVRA PVBLICA ET LIBERTATEM SCRIPTIS VINDICAVIT
QVANQVAM AVTEM SEMPER DE SE MODESTE ADMODVM SENSERIT
BONOSQVE OMNES AMORE SIT AMPLEXVS
QVAE IN SACRIS TAMEN LITERIS PRAESCRIPTA IVDICAVIT
NVLLO NEQVE COMMODO NEQVE HONORE SVO POTVIT ADDVCI
QVO MINVS CONSTANTER EIS ADHAEREret
NATVS A. D. MDCLXIII ABENDONIAE IN AGRO BERCHENSI
LONDINVM SE CONTVLIT ANNO MDCLXXXV
VBI TRIENNIO POST VXOREM DVXIT SVSANNAM GILL
PIA ET HONESTA STIRPE PROGENITAM
CVIVS PATER GALLIAM NATALE SOLVM
MAGNASQVE ILLIC FACVLTATES RELIGIONIS CAVSA RELIQVERAT
DEINCEPS ANNO MDCXC AD SACRVM PASTORIS OFFICIVM COOPTATVS
GREGEM FIDEI SVAE COMMISSVM
VIGILANTER PASCERE ET CVSTODIRE PERSEVERAVIT
DONEC STVDIIS ET LABORIBVS CVRARVMQVE MOLE OPPRESSVS
EX VITA DISCEDENS IN CHRISTO PLACIDE OBDORMIVIT
V ID. IVLII A. D. MDCCXIII AETATIS SVAE XLIX
VIDVA ET QVATVOR LIBERIS SVPERSTITIBVS SIBI RELICTIS

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The

The reaſonableneſs and advantages of an early converſion to God demonſtrated.

SERMON I.

ECCLES. xii. 1.

Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them.

HOW much ſoever the thoughts of youth are buſied with the amuſing entertainment of the many ſenſible objects that accoſt them, and thereby rendered unapt for any ſerious reflections on the vanity of the world, and on the excellency and happineſs of a ſpiritual and

heavenly converſation; yet when reaſon, experience, and religion, all conſpire to beſpeak their attention (as they do in our text, and indeed in this whole book) one might well expect that many would have the juſtice, or prudence, or at leaſt the curioſity, to give three ſuch monitors a hearing.

When a prince excelling all other men in wiſdom, and other monarchs in wealth and ſplendor, has ſo much charity for mankind as to turn a *preacher* [a]; who would not be ambitious to become his *auditor?* The news of his wiſdom and grandeur drew the queen of Sheba *from the utmoſt parts of the earth* [b], to become an immediate and admiring witneſs of what ſhe had before, at a diſtance, and but imperfectly heard: fame it ſelf, which uſes ſo mightily to inhance the glory of other princes, having, it ſeems, detracted from his; which ſo far exceeded the common ſtandard, that it was but faintly repreſented by thoſe encomiums, which might have been juſtly counted ſtrained hyperboles, when applied to others. Who would not then at leaſt ſo far imitate that generous princeſs, as to recollect his roving thoughts from the ends of the earth, whither they are prone to wander, to fix them on a ſubject, which the great and wiſe Solomon recommends to youth with the greateſt advantage of reaſon, and ſtrength of argument? Curioſity, if no other conſide-

[a] Eccl. 1. [b] 1 Kings 10.

ration

ration ſhould, would undoubtedly prompt many to deſire, with the queen of the ſouth, to hear his wiſe ſpeeches, if he were now alive, and to that end to undergo the charge and fatigue of a tedious journey: ought we not then to put a high value on his writings, wherein we have that very ſenſe, which ſo much aſtoniſhed his hearers, when he ſpake to them; and by which, as it is ſaid of Abel, *being dead, he yet ſpeaks to us* [c]? Nor have we need to traverſe the mighty waters to hear him, or to ſay, as Moſes ſpeaks concerning the law, *Who ſhall go over the ſea for us, and bring his words to us, that we may hear them, and do them* [d]? ſeeing they are ſo very near us in the divine treatiſes he has written.

And as his extraordinary knowledg promiſes us much, ſo his large experience may juſtly raiſe our expectation ſtill higher. This makes a man ſpeak more feelingly, and with more demonſtration. Beſides, 'tis not only the experience of a man endow'd with a vaſt ſtock of wiſdom and good ſenſe, who conſequently was able to make very curious and exact remarks on the event of things; but of one, who by the advantage of his elevated ſtation in the world, and of his immenſe riches, was alſo capable of furniſhing himſelf with whatever the world could yield, or his large curioſity deſire [e]. And tho it was his great unhappineſs and ſin *to give his heart to*

[c] Heb. 11. 4.
[d] Deut. 30. 13, 14.
[e] Eccleſ. 2. 4—10.

know madness and folly, after that criminal manner he confesses he did [f]; yet even this may make way for his advice: since he that here decries a loose and sensual, and commends a strict and virtuous course of life, is one, who had thorowly tried what pleasures the world could afford; and upon a just estimate pronounces them all not only *vanity*, but *vexation of spirit*, at the beginning of this book; and at the latter end of it, from his happier experience of the worth and sweetness of a religious life, recommends it as the only way to happiness [g]. So that since these thoughts are the result not only of his speculation, but of his experience too, and that an experience so dearly bought, at the expence of so much thought and invention, unhappily employ'd in *making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof* [h]; of so much time and treasure; and, which is infinitely more, at the expence of his innocence and peace of conscience, and this with the great and apparent hazard of his soul: how much does it behove those that are young to become wise at his cost, and to attend to the testimony of his experience, as well as to the evidence of his reason?

But we have not only the wisest man in the world giving us rules in a matter of the greatest weight, and confirming them with

[f] Eccl. 1. 17. Chap. 2, 1, 3, &c.
[g] Eccl. 12. 13.
[h] Rom. 13. 14.

the

the *probatum eſt* of a very large and long experience; for, *behold, a greater than Solomon is here* [i]. The wiſeſt of men *wrote* this book, but the ſpirit of wiſdom *inſpired* it [k]. If then all the advantageous characters of Solomon ſhould not much influence the minds of young perſons to regard his admonitions; yet the authority of the Holy Spirit himſelf, whoſe dictates theſe originally are, lays a ſtrict obligation on them to obſerve them, as his own divine counſels, with a religious zeal, and to reſpect them as his precepts, with an awful reverence.

To form in our minds a juſt idea of the general drift and deſign of this book, 'tis proper to obſerve, that as 'tis natural for man to ſeek to be happy, and therefore the philoſophers of all ages, and of all nations, have given rules according to their ſenſe of things, for the obtaining this great end; we have Solomon, a very philoſophical prince, and who of all others deſerves beſt to be term'd the prince of philoſophers, giving in this book the hiſtory of himſelf, with reſpect to the method he took in the purſuit of happineſs; recounting to us his falſe ſteps for our warning, and at laſt making the end, and duty, and intereſt of man, all to conſiſt in the ſervice and fear of God: which ſeems to be compris'd in the cloſe of this book, in thoſe words: *Let us hear the concluſion of the*

[i] Mat. 12. 42. | [k] 2 Tim. 3. 16.

whole matter, fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man[1]: where if we leave out the word *duty*, which is not found in the original, more ſcope is given to the words, *this is the whole of man, q. d.* his whole duty, end, and intereſt. So that while he is looking back with regret on the loſs of his own time, and with a penitential ſorrow reflects on the ſins of his youth, he earneſtly admoniſhes others to beware in time of the rock on which he ſplit; to be warn'd of taking a wrong courſe by his fall; to be perſuaded to take a right one by his repentance; and, as an excellent mean conducing to both their preſent and future happineſs, to devote themſelves, as ſoon as poſſible, to the ſervice of God, or, in the words of our text, to *remember their creator in the days of their youth.*

For our better underſtanding of which words, order directs us to take notice of thoſe in the two laſt verſes of the foregoing chapter, on which they have an immediate dependance; where the wiſe man ſeems to obviate an objection, which ſome, eſpecially thoſe whoſe youthful heat prompts them to purſue the pleaſures of the world, would raiſe againſt his paſt diſcourſe, which ſo much depretiates them. If ſuch ſhould ſay, his morals are too ſevere; he anſwers them, chap. 11. ver. 9. *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart chear thee in the days*

[1] Ch. 12. 13.

of

of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the ſight of thine eyes: which, according to ſome, is a conceſſion of a moderate uſe of worldly pleaſures, and may be thus paraphras'd: " Imagine not, O " young man, that I pretend to make it a " crime for thee to be chearful in the uſe of " the good things of this life, which the pro- " vidence of God allots thee: no; gratify " the deſires of thy heart, and entertain thy " eyes and other ſenſes with variety of plea- " ſant objects, provided a due moderation be " obſerv'd in all theſe things, ſo that thou " *uſe, and not abuſe them* [m]; for an account " of thy management of them muſt be ren- " dered before the juſt tribunal of the al- " mighty. I do not bid thee renounce the " joys and comforts of this life; *but know* " *thou, that for all theſe things God will bring* " *thee into judgment*: I therefore caution " thee of the danger of being inſnar'd by an " inordinate deſire of them."

Others interpret theſe words as an ironical permiſſion, whereby the abſurdity of the wild maxims, and extravagant ſayings, with which young perſons are wont to encourage themſelves and others to perſiſt in a vitious courſe, are expos'd; and a ſerious caution thereupon ſubjoin'd. " Youth, ſay they, is " the time of life moſt fited for pleaſure and " joy, the ſenſes are then moſt lively and

[m] 1 Cor. 7. 31.

" impreſſible; and as a multitude of charm-
" ing objects are continually inviting us, ſo
" our own inclinations are prompting us to
" embrace them. Now therefore is the time
" for us to abandon our ſelves to mirth and
" pleaſure." Well, ſays Solomon, *Rejoice, O young man*, &c. *q. d.* " Take thy own courſe,
" give up thy ſelf to the conduct of thy be-
" loved luſts, take thy fill of jollity and plea-
" ſure; but mark the conſequence, be aſſur'd
" that for this courſe of life, if obſtinately
" perſiſted in, the great and juſt God will
" judg and condemn thee to eternal pains;
" *know thou, that for all theſe things God will*
" *bring thee into judgment.*"

Which laſt ſenſe ſeems to me moſt genuine, not only becauſe we have ſeveral examples of this ironical way of ſpeaking in the holy ſcripture: as that ſaying of our bleſſed Saviour to his diſciples, *Sleep on now, and take your reſt* [n], ſeems to be, both from the reproof for ſleeping, and exhortation to watchfulneſs, which he had given them juſt before [o]; and from the alarm he gives them, not to indulge their drowſineſs, but to *riſe and be going*, for the reaſon he aſſigns [p] juſt after thoſe words: and that of the prophet Micajah to king Ahab, who enquired of him, whether he ſhould go up againſt Ramoth-Gilead [q], *Go and proſper*, &c. [r] whereby he aſſumes the

[n] Mat. 26. 45.
[o] Ver. 40, 41.
[p] Ver. 45, 46.
[q] 1 Kings 22. 15.
[r] Ver. 12.

language

language of the falſe prophets; but afterwards explains himſelf in expreſs terms, *If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not ſpoken by me* [r]. Not only do ſuch examples as theſe, I ſay, juſtify this ſenſe of the words laſt given; but that which ſeems eſpecially to make it preferable to the former is, that thoſe phraſes, in the ſentence we are examining, of *walking in the way of one's heart, and in the ſight of one's eyes*, cannot be eaſily accommodated to a moderate uſe of worldly enjoyments, as the former ſenſe ſuppoſes, ſeeing it is evident, they are uſed to quite another purpoſe in the ſcripture, by that prohibition God gave the Iſraelites, *not to ſeek after their own heart, and their own eyes* [s]; and by the curſe Job imprecates on himſelf, *if his heart had walked after his eyes* [t]; both which ſhew, that *to walk after one's heart and eyes*, is an expreſſion more fairly applicable to a diſſolute and ſinful courſe of life, than to a temperate uſe of lawful pleaſures.

After this ironical permiſſion of ſinful pleaſures, and the ſerious premonition of judgment ſubjoin'd to it, follows a concluſion in theſe terms: *Therefore remove ſorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy fleſh; for childhood and youth are vanity* [u].

Which ſome will have to be a continuation of the irony, and, if taken in a proper ſenſe,

[r] Ver. 17, 18. See alſo 1 Kings 18. 27. Ezek. 28. 3, 4.
[s] Num. 15. 39.
[t] Job. 31. 7.
[u] Eccl. 11. 10.

to

to ſpeak the language of thoſe libertines, who notwithſtanding what he had before ſaid, would ſtill devote themſelves to the pleaſures of ſin. As if he ſhould ſay, " Caſt away (as " you reſolve to do) all ſerious thoughts; " fly the occaſions of trouble and ſorrow, as " much as poſſible; avoid whatever is un- " grateful to fleſh and blood: for time is " fleeting, childhood and youth, thoſe op- " portunities of delight and pleaſure, will " ſoon vaniſh, therefore the ſweets they afford " muſt be reap'd in their ſeaſon." For thus do ſome ſenſualiſts argue for the preſent and earneſt purſuit of worldly pleaſures, from their vanity in reſpect of the ſhortneſs of their continuance; which ought rather, when their eternal ill conſequences are conſidered, to take off the edge of the appetite toward them. So the prophet, and after him the apoſtle introduces them arguing: *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we ſhall die* [v].

But it ſeems not ſo likely that the irony ſhould be reiterated after ſo expreſs and ſerious a warning of judgment, as that in the former verſe, eſpecially ſeeing this is joined to it by the word *therefore*, as a concluſion founded thereupon: *Therefore remove ſorrow from thy heart*, &c.

I ſhould rather therefore give the words ſuch a turn as this, viz. *Seeing God will bring thee to judgment, therefore remove ſorrow*, &c.

[v] Iſa. 22. 13. 1 Cor. 15. 32.

q. d.

q. d. " Mix innocence with thy joy; be " merry and wiſe; reform thy life, and a " *good conſcience* ſhall be to thee *a continual* " *feaſt* [w]. The evil of ſorrow need not poſ- " ſeſs thy heart, if the evil of ſin be extirpa- " ted from thy fleſh: govern thy body with " temperance and chaſtity, and joy ſhall reign " in thy ſoul."

Or, as others will have it, *Remove anger from thy heart*, (for ſo the word [x], here tranſlated *ſorrow*, properly ſignifies) *q. d.* " Be " not angry with them that adviſe thee well; " or, be not diſpleas'd with God for the " ſtrictneſs of his precepts, which I recom- " mend to thee, or for the ſeverity of his " judgments, of which I warn thee."

Or elſe the paſſion of anger, becauſe it ſo violently agitates the ſoul, may be put for all the vitious affections of the mind, and then the meaning of the words is; *Remove all ſinful paſſions from thy mind, and put away evil from thy fleſh:* q. d. " *Give not the mem-* " *bers of thy body to the ſervice of ſin* [y]."

Which exhortation is urg'd by this reaſon, *for childhood and youth are vanity*; *q. d.* " Theſe pleaſures, thou art ſo hotly in chaſe " of now, will vaniſh and diſappear together " with thy youth, which is a flower that " ſoon fades; and why ſhouldſt thou, for " ſhort-liv'd joys, expoſe thy ſoul to the " hazard of eternal miſery?"

[w] Prov. 15. 15. טוב לב
[x] בעס
[y] Rom. 6. 19.

Or

Or elſe the ſenſe of the wiſe man may be to this purpoſe: " I have reaſon to admoniſh " thoſe that are young of the evil and dan- " ger of a ſenſual life, becauſe none are ſo " prone to be inſnared by its charms as they, " whoſe imaginations, words, and actions are " generally ſo vain, that they may be fitly " term'd vanity it ſelf, vanity in the abſtract; " *for childhood and youth are vanity.*"

Upon which he adds a ſuitable exhortation to ſuch, in the words of our text, which are connected to thoſe above with a particle, which in our tranſlation is render'd *now*[z], but is no adverb of time, but commonly ſignifies *and*, and ſo may be joined to what he had adviſed before, *viz. Put away evil from thy fleſh, and remember thy creator*; putting this ſentence, *for childhood and youth are vanity*, in a parentheſis between thoſe two inſtructions. Or elſe it may be render'd *then*, or *therefore*, and ſo is an inference from the premiſes; *q. d.* " If there is a time " of judgment to be expected, and *childhood* " *and youth are vanity*; then it concerns ſuch " to *remember their creator*, &c."

In which words we have three things to conſider.

Firſt, a duty enjoined or exhorted to.

Secondly, the ſpecial time of engaging in the performance of this duty preſcribed.

Thirdly, the reaſons of it intimated.

[z] וזכר

I. The

I. The duty exhorted to is, *Remember thy creator.*

II. The ſpecial time of engaging in this duty is ſignified:

1. In expreſs terms, *In the days of thy youth.*

2. By an oppoſite periphraſis, which contains a deſcription of old age, *While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them,* i. e. before the approach of old age.

III. The reaſons hereof are couched and inſinuated:

1. In the terms of the duty ſet before us, where the relation we ſtand in to God, as he is our creator, implies the obligation we are under to remember him, and that *in our youth.*

2. In the terms uſed to ſignify the proper time of this duty; where the fitneſs of the ſeaſon of youth for entring one's ſelf into the ſervice of God, and the diſadvantage of deferring it to old age, are ſuggeſted.

Of theſe we ſhall treat ſeverally in their order.

I. To explain the duty to which we are exhorted, we ſhall conſider,

1. the object of it, namely our creator; and we ſhall endeavour to ſhew what

is

is included in that title here attributed to God:

2. The act it ſelf, of remembering, what it imports.

1. We are to enquire what is included in this title of creator, here attributed to God.

(1.) It plainly and expreſly declares, that God is the author and original of the being of man. And may alſo include,

(2.) That he is the upholder and preſerver of our being.

(3.) That he is the reſtorer and reformer of man.

(4.) That he is the ſovereign arbiter and diſpoſer of our being.

(1.) God is our creator, as he is the original and author of our being: for

[1.] He created the matter of which we are compoſed, as well as that of all the other parts of the univerſe. All beings of which the world conſiſts, all that we have any notices of, either from reaſon or ſcripture, are either ſpiritual or corporeal, and all theſe are the works of God. Now man is a creature compounded of both theſe kinds of being; his ſoul is a ſpirit, and his body is a material ſubſtance: and both theſe conſtituent parts of mankind were created by God the author of the whole univerſe.

And here we conſider the term *create* in its ſtricteſt ſenſe, namely, the giving a being to that which had none before, the producing

producing of ſomething out of nothing, *i. e.* without any preexiſtent matter to work upon.

Now it muſt be granted that the ſoul and body of man either are from eternity, or elſe had a beginning in time; and if they had a beginning, that it muſt be either from themſelves, or from ſome other being inferior to God, or from God himſelf.

I ſhall therefore briefly prove, both from reaſon and ſcripture, that they are not eternal, but had a beginning; and this not of themſelves, nor of any other being but God himſelf, as our text imports, by ſtyling him our creator.

1.) Our ſubſtance is not from eternity: there is no plauſible colour for ſuch a wild conceit, ſeeing there are no characters of eternity engraven on our ſouls, the nobler part of man; much leſs are there any veſtiges of it imprinted on that clay, of which our bodies are compoſed.

The memory we have of our own exiſtence, extends but to a very few years; therefore we cannot pretend, that we remember our ſelves to have been from eternity; nor has any eternal being revealed to us that our ſubſtance is eternal, tho we knew it not, or had forgotten it. And is it likely that a being, to which thinking is eſſential, ſhould have ſo excellent a property as to exiſt eternally, and yet labour under ſo great a defect, as the entire oblivion of its own eternal duration?

Is it to be imagin'd that if the minds of men had been eternal, there would have been any room left for thoſe many new and great improvements of arts and ſciences, which have been ſo often ſeen in the world? how could paſt eternity be ſo deficient, as to leave any thing to future invention to diſcover or cultivate? Is it probable that our knowledg, even of things much inferior to our ſelves, would be ſo inconſiderable as it is, and that the vileſt inſect, nay the moſt deſpicable portion of inanimate matter, ſhould ſo puzzle the moſt ſpeculative and ingenious minds, that enquire into their nature, if thoſe minds were from eternity? is it not much more reaſonable to conclude, that *we are but of yeſterday, becauſe we know nothing* [a]? And can it be thought that a being that wanted no cauſe for its exiſtence, ſhould need a cauſe to give it properties far below that of eternity? that a being which cannot be meaſured by time, ſhould yet be liable to ſo many changes and troubles, as we ſee the ſouls of men are continually expoſed to?

And if the ſoul cannot juſtly claim this property; how can the body, which conſiſts of dull unactive matter, and wants thoſe leſſer qualities which the ſoul poſſeſſes, be imagined to have that greater excellency of eternity, to which the ſoul her ſelf cannot reaſonably pretend?

[a] Job 8. 9.

No

No——this is the divine prerogative, and is not to be attributed to any other being than the ſupreme; who calls himſelf, *I AM*[b], *i. e.* being in the abſtract, being it ſelf; and *JEHOVAH, i. e.* the eternal one; *who only hath immortality*[c] in this abſolute ſenſe, and of whom alone it can be ſaid, *He is from everlaſting to everlaſting*[d].

For what is eternal is infinite and independent. Infinite in duration: for that which had no cauſe to produce it does neceſſarily exiſt; and that which neceſſarily exiſts is infinitely durable, and independent by the ſame reaſon: and that which is independent, and infinite in duration, may be juſtly accounted infinite in all other reſpects, and ſo infinitely perfect; which is the ſole prerogative of God, and incommunicable to any being inferior to him.

It therefore follows, that we had once no being; that our ſouls and bodies, as well as all other beings, except God, had a beginning.

And if we had a beginning,

2.) We could not be the authors of our own being; we could not give our ſelves a being before we had being. Nothing can be thought on more abſurd, than that nothing, which cannot act in any ſenſe, ſhould be capable of creating. That *nothing is made of nothing*[e], if taken in this ſenſe, is a true

[b] Exod. 3. 14.
[c] 1 Tim. 6. 16.
[d] Pſal. 90. 2. Iſa. 63. 16.
[e] Ex nihilo nihil fit.

maxim, *viz.* that nothing can make its no-ſelf to be; but is not to be conſtrued ſo as to exempt God, whoſe power is infinite, from being able to make a being, which did not exiſt before. And,

3.) No other being, except God, could make us, or any thing elſe, out of nothing: for how can leſs than an infinite power tranſport any thing from nullity to exiſtence, ſeeing there is an infinite diſtance betwixt them? as appears, in that, if you multiply nothing to infinity, it will never mount to any real being; and if in thought you diminiſh any thing that exiſts to the loweſt degree of being imaginable, you can never make it appear a mere nothing. This diſtance therefore being infinite, it muſt needs be proper only to an infinite power, to make that exiſt which is not yet in being; as it muſt needs be only the withdrawment of that power from ſupporting the being of a creature, that can annihilate it.

Beſides, if no being, that has had a beginning, could give it ſelf exiſtence, and all things inferior to God had a beginning, as we have prov'd; then no being inferior to him could make us exiſt: for how ſhould that, which does neither neceſſarily exiſt, nor could give it ſelf a being, be capable of giving being to any thing elſe, when it wholly depends on God for its own?

And as being, ſimply conſider'd, is the moſt univerſal effect, all creatures partaking

of

of it in common; it muſt be owing to the moſt univerſal cauſe, which is no other than God himſelf: therefore he only can create, or make that to be which was not before.

Nor have we only the light of reaſon in this caſe; but that of divine revelation too, which aſſures us, that *in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth* [f], i. e. the whole univerſe. He made the firſt matter, out of which this curious fabric was built; he made the earth, which was without form and void [g]; and then raiſed a beautiful ſtructure out of it. *Thro' faith*, as well as reaſon, *we underſtand that the worlds were fram'd by the word of God, ſo that things which are ſeen, were not made of things which do appear* [h].

[2.] As God is the author of the matter of which we conſiſt; ſo is he alſo of our form and compoſition, as well as of that of the reſt of the univerſe. It was a vain ſuppoſition of Ariſtotle, that this frame of the world had no beginning, and conſequently that the ſpecies of mankind has exiſted from eternity. This fancy has been ſufficiently diſprov'd by the reaſons before alledg'd againſt the eternity of the firſt matter of the world; for if that be not eternal, much leſs can the form of it be ſo.

Nor is the Epicurean whimſy leſs abſurd, which ſuppoſes, that from a fortuitous ſhuffling of an infinite number of ſelf-exiſt-

[f] Gen. 1. 1.
[g] Ver. 2.
[h] Heb. 11. 3.

ent, and ſelf-moving atoms, this ſtately frame of the world did emerge; and that mankind, and all other animals, ſprung out of the earth by ſuch a caſual way of generation as this. As if dead matter could move it ſelf, and as if the colliſion of material particles could produce a ſubſtance capable of reaſoning and judging, willing and deſiring, ſuch as the ſoul of man is. And what can be more abſurd than to imagine, that the accidental motions of thoſe minute particles could frame the curious ſtructure of a human body; nay the whole ſyſtem of the univerſe, and every ſpecies in it? 'Tis leſs unreaſonable to imagine, when one ſees a magnificent palace, that it was built by the caſual jumbling together of the materials that compoſe it; or that the moſt curious watch was fram'd after this odd manner; that an elegant picture may have reſulted from the accidental and unheeded mixture of colours; or an elaborate oration or poem, as many have obſerv'd, from a confus'd ſhuffling of the letters of the alphabet.

'Tis evident from the harmonious combination of the ſeveral parts of the world, and the curious frame of each ſpecies in it, and particularly of mankind, that all has been diſpos'd in number, weight and meaſure, by the infinite wiſdom and power of that God, who is *wonderful in counſel, and excellent in working* [i].

[i] Iſa. 28. 29.

And

And this truth is ſo very clear, that the minds of the generality of the heathens themſelves have been penetrated with the light of it. And therefore the apoſtle Paul cites to the Athenians one of their celebrated authors, to prove, what others of them generally confeſs'd, that God is the *original author of mankind* [k]. So that it is manifeſt from reaſon that God has form'd us.

And this the ſacred hiſtorian of the creation expreſly aſſerts: *God ſaid, let us make man in our image, after our likeneſs; ſo God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them* [l]. And again, *The Lord God formed man of the duſt of the ground, and breathed into his noſtrils the breath of life, and man became a living ſoul* [m]. 'Tis God, who is *the former of all things* [n], that *hath made us, and not we our ſelves* [o]. He both made the matter of which we conſiſt, and moulded it into that form which we bear, and by which our ſpecies is diſtinguiſhed from thoſe of other creatures.

[3.] God is our creator, or the author of our being, in that, as he has fram'd the ſpecies of mankind in general; ſo he is the former of every individual human creature that comes into the world. The multiplication of creatures according to their kind by natural propagation, is a bleſſing of God pronounc'd

[k] Act. 17. 28. τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμεν. Aratus.
[l] Gen. 1. 26, 27.
[m] Gen. 2. 7.
[n] Jer. 10. 16.
[o] Pſal. 100. 3.

on them at their creation [p]. But this way ordain'd by God for the conſervation and increaſe of each ſpecies is very myſterious and wonderful, and is in the ſcripture term'd creation, and attributed to God as ſuch. The pſalmiſt calls the generation to come, *the people that ſhall be created* [q]; and ſpeaking of the ſucceſſive diſſolution and propagation of animals, he ſays, *Thou takeſt away their breath, they die, and return to their duſt. Thou ſendeſt forth thy ſpirit, they are created; and thou reneweſt the face of the earth* [r]. Here the term creation is uſed to ſignify the conſervation and multiplication of animals in the ordinary courſe of nature; and that, as well as the firſt formation of each ſpecies, is aſcribed to the Spirit of God [f]. And God threatens the Ammonites by the prophet Ezekiel, to judge them *in the place where they were created*; that is, as he explains it in the next words, *in the land of their nativity* [s].

And God is the creator in this reſpect, in a ſenſe beyond what is ordinarily imagin'd. For it has in vain been attempted by men to explain the formation of plants and animals, by the natural laws of motion: and ſo many inſuperable difficulties meet them, when they would ſhew how their organs are mechanically form'd in natural generation, that they appear impoſſible to be ſolv'd, without attri-

[p] Gen. 1.
[q] Pſal. 102. 18.
[r] Pſal. 104. 29, 30.
[f] Gen. 1. 2.
[s] Ezek. 21. 30.

buting

buting to an almighty power the formation of every individual creature, as well as of every ſpecies, and that in a way more immediate, at leaſt more myſterious than is commonly ſuppoſed.

Nor does the conjecture of the equivocal generation of ſome plants and inſects, tho it has generally prevailed in the world as an undoubted truth, ſeem well founded; ſince that ſuppoſition has been of late years greatly diſcredited by many experiments [t], which render it very improbable, that any plant is rais'd without ſeed by a formative power in the earth, as many have pretended, or any animal ſpontaneouſly produc'd without parents. For tho God uſes theſe as inſtrumental or occaſional cauſes, himſelf is the efficient cauſe of all generation; who in this reſpect, as the apoſtle ſays in another, *worketh all in all* [u]; and tho he finiſhed the creation in ſix days, yet may be ſaid to create ſtill, or, as our Saviour ſpeaks, *to work hitherto* [v].

So that it appears to be a work proper to the creator of man, to form him in the womb, and that after a method too myſterious to be trac'd by a human underſtanding; ſince the natural laws of motion, at leaſt ſo far as known by men, are not capable of producing ſo curious a piece as a human body. And as it is generally ſuppoſed that the ſouls

[t] Malpigh. de Gallis. Swammerdam de Generat. Inſect. Lewenhoeck. Epiſtol.

[u] 1 Cor. 12. 6.
[v] John 5. 17.

of men are individually form'd, and infus'd into their bodies by the hand of God, ſince no tolerable account can be otherwiſe given of their production; ſo it muſt be granted, that the form of each individual human body is to be attributed to the ſame divine power; which operates after ſo unſearchable a manner, that every man may well ſay, not only as to the origin of mankind in general, but as to the formation of himſelf in particular, as Job did, *Thy hands have made me, and faſhioned me round about— Thou haſt made me as the clay— haſt thou not pour'd me out as milk, and crudled me like cheeſe? Thou haſt clothed me with skin and fleſh; and haſt fenced me with bones and ſinews: thou haſt granted me life*[w], &c. And with the pſalmiſt, *Thou haſt cover'd me in my mother's womb. I will praiſe thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvellous are thy works, and that my ſoul knoweth right well. My ſubſtance was not hid from thee, when I was made in ſecret, and curiouſly wrought in the loweſt parts of the earth. Thy eyes did ſee my ſubſtance yet being imperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were faſhion'd, when as yet there was none of them*[x].

(2.) It hence follows, that God is the upholder and preſerver of our being. For this is included in the term *creator*. When God by the prophet addreſſes himſelf to the

[w] Job 10. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. | [x] Pſal. 139. 13, 14, 15, 16.

Iſraelites,

Iſraelites, to encourage them to truſt in him for their preſervation, and to diſſipate their fears of danger, he ſpeaks to them under this title; *Thus ſaith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Iſrael, fear not* [y], &c. And to this exhortation he adds a promiſe, to preſerve them when ſurrounded with the greateſt difficulties, to be with them in paſſing *thro' the water*, and *thro' the fire.* And the pſalmiſt makes the relation he ſtood in to God, as his creature, a plea for his preſervation, when he ſays in his prayer, *O Lord, forſake not the works of thy own hands* [z]. The apoſtle Peter likewiſe exhorts thoſe that are perſecuted, to *commit the keeping of their ſouls to God, in well doing, as to a faithful creator* [a]. So that from hence it is evident, that the relation God bears to us as our creator, includes his providential care for our preſervation: that God who is our *maker*, is alſo *the preſerver of men* [b]. As it was impoſſible that we ſhould give being to our ſelves; ſo it is beyond our power to continue our ſelves in being: and as we owe not our exiſtence to any being inferior to God; ſo neither does the duration of our being depend upon any other than him. It was the will of God that produc'd us, conſequently it is the ſame will that preſerves us. Before he actually will'd our production, we could not exiſt; and if he ſhould ceaſe to

[y] Iſa. 43. 1.
[z] Pſal. 138. 8.
[a] 1 Pet. 4. 19.
[b] Job 7. 20.

will

will the continuance of our being, it would immediately discontinue, and be annihilated: it is but for him to withdraw his hand, to suspend the influence of his power, and we sink into nothing. So that *we are kept by the power of God* in regard of our natural, as the apostle affirms we are in respect of our spiritual state [c]: and since the divine will is equally the cause of our being, and of the duration of it; the term *creator* attributed to God in our text, may be fitly extended to both; our preservation being a continuation of God's creating work: for in this respect, as well as that mention'd before of the formation of successive generations of men, according to the words of Christ, God *works hitherto* [d]. And as from him our being is deriv'd; so *in him* alone *we live, and move, and have our being* still [e]; who *upholds all things by the word of his power* [f]. And not only we, but all other creatures lean on that almighty hand for their preservation, to which they all equally owe their existence.

(3.) The term *creator* may further include that God is the restorer and reformer of man. 'Tis true, it does not necessarily follow, that, because he has made and preserves us, therefore, after we had undone our selves by sin, and effac'd the image of holiness he impress'd on us in our original frame and constitution, he also must needs actually reform us: but it

[c] 1 Pet. 1. 5.
[d] John 5. 17.
[e] Act. 17. 28.
[f] Heb. 1. 3.

does

does thence follow, that none but God can reſtore a degenerate creature; and that all thoſe, whoſe corrupt nature is reform'd, derive that bleſſing from the almighty author of their being. The ſame divine goodneſs, wiſdom and power, that at the creation of the world ſaid, *let there be light* [g], which operative word produc'd light immediately, is neceſſary to illuminate the benighted minds of men, who are by ſin become *the children of darkneſs* [h]; and *to call them out of that darkneſs into the marvellous light* of divine truth [i]. Therefore the apoſtle Paul aſſures us, that it is *that God who at firſt commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, that ſhines in the hearts* of ſuch, *to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt* [k]. He who made all things *very good* in their kind at the creation [l], and who then *made man upright* [m], he alone is able to rectify the perverſneſs of his will, and to purify his heart from the pollution it has contracted; to *create* in him *a clean heart, and renew a right ſpirit within him* [n]. Nothing leſs than our creator's own divine goodneſs could move him to reſtore deprav'd ſinners; nothing leſs than his own divine wiſdom could contrive the method of their reſtoration; and nothing leſs than his own divine power could put it

[g] Gen. 1. 3.
[h] 1 Theſſ. 5. 5.
[i] 1 Pet. 2. 9.
[k] 2 Cor. 4. 6.
[l] Gen. 1. 31.
[m] Eccl. 7. 29.
[n] Pſal. 51. 10.

in

in execution, and accompliſh it: he contriv'd the ſcheme of this glorious work, he appointed and prepared the means, and he renders them effectual to the end deſign'd.

Who but our creator is able to reſtore us, and reform us from ſin; ſeeing ſin is a privation of ſanctity, a nullity oppos'd to the being of holineſs? Nay, a ſtate of ſin is a ſtate of rebellion againſt God, a ſtate of enmity and oppoſition to the author of our being; therefore worſe than annihilation it ſelf: becauſe that which is not, as it can do no good, ſo does no evil; as it is not for God, ſo is not againſt him. But a ſinful creature commits his ſins *againſt him, even againſt him*, as the pſalmiſt emphatically repeats it, *and does evil in his ſight* [o]; actually oppoſes, and diſ-ſerves him, who is the ſupreme being, and ſole author of the whole creation. Therefore tho the word of God brought us out of nullity, and gave us being; nothing leſs than the *blood* of God [p] could avail to redeem us from that abyſs of iniquity and miſery into which we were ſunk by our apoſtaſy from him.

Who but he that *eſtabliſh'd the world by his wiſdom, and ſtretched out the heavens by his diſcretion and underſtanding* [q], could have form'd the method of our reſtoration, ſo as to glorify his *holineſs and juſtice*, as well as his *grace and mercy* by it; ſo as to make *mercy and truth meet together, and righteouſ-*

[o] Pſal. 51. 4.
[p] Act. 20. 28.
[q] Jer. 10. 12. & 51. 15.

neſs

neſs and peace to kiſs each other[r], as he hath done by recovering fallen man by the ſacrifice of his only begotten ſon? What depths of wiſdom appear in this ſtupendous *myſtery of godlineſs, God manifeſted in the fleſh*[f], that ſin ſhould be puniſh'd with the utmoſt ſeverity, and yet the ſinner ſpar'd by infinite mercy! That our Saviour, who *knew no ſin, ſhould be be made ſin for us, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him*[s]! And the ſame characters of divine wiſdom, that appear in the foundation, are ſeen in the whole ſuperſtructure of the church of God, and in every part of this great work of reſtoration.

Nothing can be more aſtoniſhing than that infinite mercy that appears in this mighty work; which can have no other author than that infinite being that hath created us. Who, but *he that made us, would* or could *have* ſo much *mercy on us*[t]? And who, but *he that formed us, would ſhew us* ſo much *favour*, as to reſcue us from ſin, and the curſes entail'd on it, by ſo endearing a ranſom, as the precious blood of his own Son?

And as none but our maker is capable of redeeming us; ſo the frequent uſe he makes of the term *creator* in his word, to encourage men to obey him, and to truſt in him, may well be ſuppos'd to intimate the deſign he had form'd to reſtore ſinners to his favour: for had he not revealed himſelf to be willing,

[r] Pſal. 85. 10.
[f] 1 Tim. 3. 16.
[s] 2 Cor. 5. 21.
[t] Iſa. 27. 11.

as

as well as able, to be our creator in this sense, by taking us into his hand the second time to reform us, or create us anew; there would be no room for us, since we have all violated the laws of our first creation, to hope to offer any acceptable service to him, or to expect any favour from him: there would be no encouragement to remember him as our creator in the first sense, exclusive of this latter; because our guilt would fill us with terror at every due remembrance of him, who, as he made us for his glory, so is able to punish us, and might justly do it, for the indignities we have offer'd him by our sins. So that whenever God is pleas'd to press or incourage us to our duty in his word, by styling himself our creator, we are to consider that title, as tacitly including his being our redeemer too; that *the God that made us*, is also *the rock of our salvation* [u].

And we find the great work of the Holy Spirit in renewing and regenerating a sinner, is frequently term'd *creation* in holy writ [v]; both to signify the greatness of the work, and the resemblance this new creation in several respects bears to the first; and also to denote, that both those mighty works are to be ascrib'd to the same author; and that God may be term'd our creator, not only in that he gave us a being, but also in that he often makes sinners become *new creatures*,

[u] Deut. 32. 15. | [v] 2 Cor. 5. 17. Gal. 6. 15.

by

by *renewing them in knowledge after his own image* [w]; *and* by *creating them in righteouſneſs and true holineſs* [x]; who are therefore call'd *his workmanſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus to good works* [y], &c.

And it is worth remarking, that this word *creator* in our text, is of the plural number in the original, *thy creators* [z], as if deſign'd to expreſs the great obligations men are under to each perſon of the bleſſed Trinity, for making, redeeming, and ſanctifying them; the former of which is eminently aſcribed to the Father, the ſecond to the Son, and the laſt to the Holy Spirit, tho all concur in each of thoſe mighty works; and to ſignify that all theſe works may be fitly expreſs'd by this common name of creation.

(4.) As God is our creator, he is the ſovereign arbiter, and diſpoſer of our being. He is the ſupreme judge of the world, inflicting puniſhments, and diſpenſing favours, as he pleaſes. He that has made us, and preſerves us, has power to render us happy or miſerable: he has the iſſues of life and death in his hand. He that hath created us, knows all the capacity we have of joy or ſorrow, pleaſure or pain; and has power to affect us with either of them, as he pleaſes. He can make his *arrows* of terror *ſtick faſt* in the conſcience [a]; or fill the ſoul with unſpeakable

[w] Col. 3. 10.
[x] Eph. 4. 24.
[y] Eph. 2. 10.
[z] בוראיך So Iſa. 54. 5. בעליך עשיך
[a] Pſal. 38. 2.

joy.

joy. He can puniſh or cheer the mind with his immediate frowns or ſmiles; or he can convey anguiſh or joy into the ſoul, by the occaſion of different impreſſions on the tabernacle of fleſh and blood wherein ſhe dwells: he can diſpenſe puniſhments or pleaſures by his own hand immediately, or mediately by any of his creatures. And *when he giveth quietneſs, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done againſt a nation or againſt a man only*[b]. 'Tis *the Lord*, as Hannah ſpeaks, that *killeth and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich, he bringeth low and lifteth up*[c]. Which this holy propheteſs proves by this argument; *For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath ſet the world upon them:* where his ſovereign power over men to diſpoſe of their ſtate as he pleaſes, is infer'd from his relation to them as their creator. And when the angel in the revelation proteſts *there ſhould be time no longer*; he *ſwears by him that created heaven and earth, and ſea, and the things therein*[d]; to ſhew that God, as creator of the world, is the ſovereign arbiter of it, and that the conſummation of time, and of temporal things, belongs to him under that character. So that it is our maker, that both *ſhews the path of life*[e], and holds in his hand

[b] Job 34. 29.
[c] 1 Sam. 2. 6, 7, 8.
[d] Rev. 10. 6.
[e] Pſal. 16. 11.

the

the *keys of hell and death* [f]. And as he made all things; so *he does whatsoever he pleases in heaven, and in earth, in the sea, and all deep places* [g]. And, *who can deliver out of his hand* [h]? seeing *he doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what dost thou* [i]?

Thus have we endeavoured to shew what is comprehended in God's title of *creator*; on which we have taken the greater liberty to expatiate, because hereby a solid foundation is laid for some of those reasons, on which we are hereafter to insist to inforce the duty in our text; in the division of which we have observ'd, that in the terms of the duty, *Remember thy creator*, the reasons of that duty are in part insinuated.

Having given some account of the object of this duty, *viz.* God, under the title of our creator; we shall now,

Secondly, briefly explain the act it self of remembring him, and shew what that imports.

The memory is that faculty of the soul whereby she is capable of recalling the ideas of things, which have before been present to her.

But here, *to remember* not only signifies the exercising of the understanding on our creator, by reflecting on what our senses, reason,

[f] Rev. 1. 18.
[g] Psal. 135. 6.
[h] Job 10. 7.
[i] Dan. 4. 35.

and divine revelation may have ſuggeſted to our minds, concerning God under that character: it does not here barely import, *to meditate* on him [k], and *bear* him *in mind* [l], but, becauſe the underſtanding directs the will and affections, and men move and act very much according to their conceptions of things, their deſires following the conduct of their thoughts; this term is applied both to the one, and to the other. Sometimes it ſignifies to eſteem and reſpect, as Pſal. 20. 3. *The Lord—remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt ſacrifice.* Sometimes to *truſt*, as Pſal. 20. 7. *Some truſt in horſes, and ſome in Chariots; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.* Sometimes to worſhip and praiſe, as 1 Chron. 16. 12. where, after David had exhorted to ſing to God, to glory in him, and ſeek him, becauſe of his mighty works, he adds to the ſame purpoſe, *Remember the marvellous works that he hath done*, &c. *q. d.* Adore and praiſe him for them.

And this may be farther illuſtrated by the uſe of the oppoſite term of *forgetting*, which ſometimes ſignifies to diſeſteem and ſlight, as Jer. 2. 32. *Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.* Sometimes to diſtruſt, as Pſal. 78. 7. *That they might ſet their hope in God, and not forget the works of God:* and ſometimes to *neglect to praiſe*

[k] Pſal. 63. 6. [l] Luke 17. 32.

and

and worſhip God, as Pſal. 106. 12, 13. *They ſang his praiſe: they ſoon forgot his works, they waited not for his counſel.* Or to *forſake the ſervice* of God, as Deut. 6. 12. *Beware leſt thou forget the Lord*, that is, by *going after other Gods*, as it is explain'd in ver. 14.

So that, to *remember* God does not only import, to think or meditate often on him, but to think worthily and becomingly of him; and to pay him a reſpect in ſome meaſure ſuitable to the idea we have of him. To remember his glorious perfections ſo, as to eſteem and reſpect him; deliberately to call to mind the number and quality of his favours, and to recollect, how fit an object of truſt, and praiſe, and of all worſhip, he is; ſo as to engage our ſouls to confide in him, to offer him the ſacrifice of praiſe, and all the adoration and ſervice that we are capable of rendering. In a word, to remember our creator is to remember his omniſcience, power and juſtice, ſo as to reverence and fear him; to remember his goodneſs, mercy and veracity, ſo as to love and praiſe him; and to remember his holineſs and purity, ſo as to imitate and obey him: 'tis ſo attentively and ſeriouſly to meditate on his nature and on his works, that *while we are muſing the fire may burn*[m], as the pſalmiſt ſpeaks, that our thoughts may kindle a holy flame of love in our hearts towards him, which will break out in becoming acts of ſervice, and obedi-

[m] Pſal. 39. 3.

ence to his glory. 'Tis to ſerve him both with our underſtanding, will and affections, to devote our ſelves entirely to him.

And as our whole man is to be dedicated to the ſervice of our creator; ſo he alſo deſerves the whole of our time: and we ought to begin as early as poſſible to remember him: for this our text ſhews,

II. In preſcribing the ſpecial time for engaging in this duty; which now falls under our conſideration.

1. 'Tis preſcrib'd in expreſs terms, *in the days of thy youth.*

2. By an oppoſite circumlocution, containing a deſcription of old age, *While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them,* that is, before the approach of old age.

As is evident, both in that theſe *evil days,* &c. are oppoſed to the *days of youth*; and in that many elegant characters are uſed to decipher the infirmities and miſeries of old age, in the ſequel of this chapter, immediately after the text.

And in this deſcription of old age, we have,

(1.) The time it ſelf expreſſed by days and years.

(2.) The character of that time of life, thoſe *days are evil,* and thoſe years ſuch as, we ſhall confeſs that, *we have no pleaſure in them.*

(1.) For

(1.) For the time it ſelf, it may be call'd *days and years.*

[1.] Either emphatically to ſignify one and the ſame thing; it being an uſual elegancy in the Hebrew dialect, to expreſs the ſame thing in various ſynonymous terms in two ſentences, one of which immediately ſucceeds the other, which ſerve partly for illuſtration, and partly to inculcate truth in the mind: of which we have inſtances in almoſt every verſe of the 51ſt pſalm, as well as in many other places of ſcripture, as it is eaſy to obſerve. Or elſe,

[2.] By *days* to ſignify the brevity and great uncertainty of the continuance of that time; which is ſoon ſwallowed up by death, as the fleeting days of youth are ſoon loſt in old age; and by *years* the tedious paſſing of this ſhort time, by reaſon of the many afflictions and infirmities a man then labours under: tho the time is very ſhort in it ſelf, it is made very long by miſery and pain, which ſeem greatly to extend it. For as the ſoul, when fill'd with pleaſure and joy, during her eaſy poſture, forgets the time, as it were, and ſuffers it to ſlide from her with little notice; which makes it appear extremely ſhort: ſo when ſhe is fill'd with ſentiments of pain and ſorrow, her uneaſy ſituation, and impatient deſire of change, do ſo conſtantly apply her thoughts to the conſideration of that time, which is the continuance of her miſery, that it ſeems very long and irkſom to her:

ſo that the duration of her ſorrow ſeems always to increaſe in proportion to the degree of it; and a man imagines himſelf to have been much longer under an acute than under a ſlight pain, when in reality the time of their continuance is equal. Thus every moment of time becomes an heavy burden to one in miſery, who, as Moſes ſays the Iſraelites ſhould do, when under puniſhment for their ſins, cries out, *in the morning, would to God it were evening! and in the evening, would to God it were morning*[n]!—And it is well known that this is the language of old age. And therefore,

(2.) 'Tis expreſs'd by the character of *evil* days, and years wherein *no pleaſure* is to be had; which may be thus explain'd.

[1.] By *evil days* may be underſtood the decays and diſeaſes of old age[o]: and by *the years wherein there is no pleaſure*, may be ſignified the unhappineſs and miſery that thoſe diſtempers and infirmities give the mind, theſe being a great occaſion of her ſorrow, which is then eſpecially aggravated, when the guilt of the ſoul conſpires with the diſtempers of the body, to make the man completely miſerable; ſo that he ſhall ſay, that is, he ſhall confeſs or complain, that *he has no pleaſure in thoſe evil days*, that he has no ſanctuary of eaſe to fly to, no reflection to make that can allay the trouble of his

[n] Deut. 28. 67.

[o] Ætas mala. Plaut.

mind,

mind, no medicine to uſe that can remove the diſtempers of his body. For this is often the condition of thoſe, who *forgetting the Lord their maker* [p] in their youth, grow old in the ſervice of ſin. Or,

[2.] By *evil days*, which is a poſitive character, the time of old age may be repreſented, as attended with many poſitive afflictions and pains; and by the privation of pleaſure at that time, which is a negative character, may be ſignified the incapacity of reliſhing the joys and pleaſures of this life, that accompanies thoſe unpleaſant years, wherein the organs of ſenſe are very much enfeebled, eſpecially when old age has been haſten'd by the intemperance of youth.

And now ſince it appears that God as our creator, in the comprehenſive ſenſe wherein we have explain'd that title, requires us to remember him, ſo as to devote our ſelves to his fear and ſervice, and that in the time of our youth, before old age, with its many afflictions and ſorrows, overtakes us; if one makes but a tranſient reflection on theſe things, 'tis eaſy to obſerve that the wiſe man in this exhortation intimates,

III. The reaſons of the duty enjoin'd:

1. In repreſenting God, the object of it, to us, under the auguſt character of our creator; which evidently entitles him to the ſervice of our youth. And,

[p] Iſa. 51. 13.

2. In ſetting old age before us, as a ſcene of miſery and horror; as a time made up of *few and evil days* [q]. And in oppoſing them to the better days of youth; thereby to inſinuate, that as old age brings with it many great diſadvantages and impediments to obſtruct our converſion to God; ſo youth is attended with many favourable circumſtances, that render it the beſt and fitteſt ſeaſon to initiate one's ſelf in the ways of righteouſneſs.

The ſtrength of theſe reaſons I ſhall conſider at large hereafter: and ſhall content my ſelf at preſent with making ſome few brief remarks,

(1.) On the terms uſed to preſcribe the ſpecial time of the duty enjoin'd in the text.

(2.) On the terms, whereby both the object and act of this duty are expreſs'd: to ſhew how fitly they are adapted to the ſtate and circumſtances of thoſe that are young, who are the perſons to whom this exhortation is addreſs'd;

With which I ſhall conclude this diſcourſe.

(1.) From the terms uſed to ſhew the time of remembering our creator, it may be obſerv'd;

[1.] That this double timing of the duty, firſt by expreſly preſcribing it in youth, and then before old age, with its miſeries, comes on, gives the words a certain force and energy, proper to inculcate ſo important

[q] Gen. 47. 9.

an admonition: this is to give *precept upon precept, and line upon line*[r], as the prophet Iſaiah ſpeaks; which he commends as the proper courſe to inſtruct the young, or, to uſe his own words, to *teach them knowledge, and to make them underſtand doctrine, who are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breaſts*[f]; to gain the attention of giddy and unthinking youth, many of whom, tho God condeſcends *to ſpeak once, yea twice*[s], as he does here, are yet ſo dull of hearing, as not to perceive the reaſonableneſs of their duty, or at leaſt not ſufficiently to conſider it, and the danger to which the neglect of it expoſes them. And,

[2.] We may further obſerve, that this obligation of remembering our creator, extends it ſelf equally with the capacity we have of conſidering God, as our maker; and increaſes in proportion to the knowledge we may obtain of him. So that none are intirely exempt from it, who are capable of exerciſing their thoughts on God: and therefore thoſe may not pretend to be diſpens'd with, who have not arriv'd to the full maturity of youth, if they are in any degree capable of knowing their creator. As far as they are able to take notice of his nature, and of his will, ſo far are they oblig'd to worſhip and obey him.

[r] Iſa. 28. ver. 10, 13.
[f] Ver. 9.
[s] Job 33. 14.

And

And this is farther cleared by the oppoſition the wiſe man ſeems to make, betwixt the duty in our text, and the *vanity of childhood and youth*, mentioned juſt before: ſo that if we take *vanity* here in a moral ſenſe, the exhortation extends it ſelf to perſons that fall under either of thoſe denominations, that are either in the ſtate of childhood or youth. And if by *vanity*, natural frailty and mortality be intended, the words are not leſs extenſive: for then the frailty of childhood and youth, is uſed as a conſideration to prepare the way for this admonition; and children as well as young men, are therefore excited to give themſelves to the ſervice of their creator, becauſe neither are exempt from the danger of ſickneſs and of death.

And this may be farther collected from the charge given to youth in the text, to remember their creator, not only before the evil days of old age are come; but before thoſe years draw nigh, while old age is yet at a diſtance: which ſhews that none who are capable of reflecting on their relation to God as creator, may excuſe themſelves as too young to be concern'd in his ſervice. For as his being our creator, is the foundation of this duty of remembering him: ſo it is evident that our obligation to it is to be meaſured by the capacity we have of knowing him as ſuch. Therefore he may well require that the tender buds of childhood, as well as the maturer bloſſoms of youth, be conſecrated

to

to him; who ſometimts *perfects his praiſe out of the mouths of* ſuch, who in compariſon of thoſe of riper years, are but *babes and ſucklings* [t]; and therefore by the pſalmiſt, calls upon *young men and maidens, and children,* as well as *old men* [u], to praiſe and worſhip him.

(2.) That the terms of *remembering their creator* are wiſely adapted to the ſtate of youth, to engage them early in the ſervice of God, will appear by the following remarks on each of thoſe terms.

(1.) God under the title of *creator*, is fitly recommended to the young, as the object of their worſhip and obedience.

1.) Becauſe it is a term that eaſily excites in the mind a ſtrong and clear idea of God's infinite power, wiſdom and goodneſs. And the wiſe man having to do with youth, whoſe unexperience for want of years, and whoſe unattention for want of a habit of ſteady thinking, renders them leſs capable of arriving at the knowledge of *the deep things of God* [v], than thoſe who to the advantage of a long obſervation of things have added that of addicting themſelves to frequent thoughtfulneſs and meditation; he makes uſe of that title of God, which might moſt familiarly ſuggeſt a proper notion of him to their minds. He expoſes to them the alphabet of the creation, out of which even chil-

[t] Pſal. 8. 2. Mat. 21. 16.
[u] Pſal. 148. 12, 13.
[v] 1 Cor. 2. 10.

dren

dren may eaſily learn to ſpell the being of a Deity. The ignorant and the young, even *thoſe that run*, as the prophet ſpeaks [w], the heedleſs and unattentive, may read the characters of the divine attributes, which are plainly engraven on the pillars even of this material world: and, as the apoſtle obſerves, may *clearly diſcern the eternal power and Godhead* of the creator [x], who is inviſible, by the curious fabric of this viſible creation; ſo as to render them altogether inexcuſable, if they neglect to glorify God according to thoſe ſenſible notices of him, which they may ſo eaſily and conſtantly receive.

For as the ſight of a magnificent palace, induces us to conſider the skill and ability of the architect that built it: ſo when we take a ſerious proſpect of the ſtructure and frame of the world, or of any part of it, it familiarly raiſes our thoughts to its great author and cauſe: for as *every houſe is built by ſome man* [y]; ſo it is natural to conclude, with the apoſtle, that *he that built all things is God*. And therefore,

2.) This of *creator* is a title which God is uſually pleas'd to aſſume in ſcripture, to diſtinguiſh himſelf, as the *true and living God*, from the idols of the heathen; and to convince their ignorant votaries, that he is the only proper object of religious worſhip. *The Lord is the true God*, ſaith the prophet

[w] Hab. 2. 2.
[x] Rom. 1. 20, 21.
[y] Heb. 3. 4.

Jeremiah;

Jeremiah; *he is the living God, and an everlaſting King* [z].—*The Gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they ſhall periſh from the earth, and from under theſe heavens* [a]. Then ſpeaking again of the true God, he ſays, *He hath made the earth by his power; he hath eſtabliſhed the world by his wiſdom, and hath ſtretched out the heavens by his diſcretion* [b]. And then, having ſpoken of the vanity of idols, he adds; *The portion of Jacob is not like them, for he is the former of all things* [c]. And the prophet Iſaiah introduces the God of Iſrael, proving himſelf to be the true God, under the ſame character: *I have made the earth, and created man upon it; I, even my hands have ſtretched out the heavens, and all their hoſt have I commanded* [d]. And, a little after, the prophet inſults over the makers of idols [e]; and then adds, *Thus ſaith the Lord, that created the heavens, God himſelf, that formed the earth and made it, he hath eſtabliſhed it; he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited; I am the Lord, and there is none elſe* [f].

All which ſerves to ſhew how properly this title of *creator* is uſed in our text, to direct the minds of youth to the true object of love and adoration; who are ready to make as many Gods, as there are pleaſing ob-

[z] Jer. 10. 10.
[a] Ver. 11.
[b] Ver. 12.
[c] Ver. 14, 15, 16.
[d] Iſa. 45. 12.
[e] Ver. 16, 17.
[f] Ver. 18.

jects

jects in the world; and to ſacrifice themſelves, and all they have to thoſe inchanting idols, that ſtrike their ſenſes with any agreeable impreſſion. And,

3.) This is a relative title, denoting the natural relation God bears to the world; for the terms *creator* and *creature* mutually ſuppoſe one another: and not only his relation to the world in general; but to mankind, nay to every individual human creature in particular, in the word *thy creator*, is propos'd as the ground of that ſervice every one that comes into the world is oblig'd to pay to the almighty, whoſe title of *creator* includes our entire dependance on him. So that the wiſe man prudently makes choice of a term, expreſſing every man's relation to God as his creature; becauſe it is the firſt and moſt evident principle, on which to found our duty of obedience to him, and moſt apt to affect the ſoul. For, as when I think on God as creator of the world in general, it raiſes in my mind a great idea of his majeſty and ſovereignty: ſo when I conſider him as *my creator*, that relative character gives an endearing force to the reaſonable obligation I find my ſelf under to ſerve and worſhip him; becauſe I then look upon him not only as *the living God*, but alſo as *the god of my life* [g].

We may alſo obſerve,

[2.] The propriety of the term *remember*, to expreſs the reſpect and ſervice thoſe that are young owe to their maker.

[g] Pſal. 42. 8.

1.) *To*

1.) *To remember*, &c. ſignifying the exerciſe of the thoughts on God, is fitly urg'd on the young; becauſe as the moſt early impreſſions are the moſt deep and laſting, ſo a habit of holy meditation is ſooneſt acquir'd in youth, when the mind is moſt at leiſure, and not embaraſs'd with that multitude of thoughts and projects about the affairs of the world, with which riper years are uſually incumber'd. What fitter term could be choſen, by which to urge the duty of young perſons to their maker, than that of remembering him? ſeeing the memory is a faculty in which young people commonly excel, and often glory; a faculty that grows ripe betimes, and eaſily retains that tincture, with which it is early and thorowly imbued. 'Tis as if Solomon had ſaid; you that are young, ought to ſeaſon your memories with the beſt impreſſions betimes, when they are moſt capable both of receiving and retaining them; and to fill your minds with the thoughts of God, and of the ſervice you owe him, before they are crouded with the concerns and buſineſs of a perplexing world.

2.) A caution ſeems to be wiſely inſinuated in this term againſt forgetting the worſhip and ſervice of God, of which heedleſs youth, too much devoted to ſenſual pleaſure, is often guilty; for tho the young have the moſt capacious memories, yet they are very prone to forget their duty to their maker. And how aptly ſoever they remember other

things, they often live as if *God were not in any of their thoughts* [h]: for they commonly divert and diſſipate their minds ſo much with the amuſing pleaſures of this preſent world, that they don't allow themſelves time enough, either to look backward, to remember that God who created them, and to whom they owe their preſervation; nor forward, to conſider that it is only in his power to renew and reform them from their vices and errors; and that he will one day judge them; who as he is their creator, has the ſovereign diſpoſal of their being, and has power either to ſave, or to deſtroy: in whoſe favour is life, and whoſe diſpleaſure is more terrible than death.

[h] Pſal. 10. 4.

The reasonableness and advantages of an early conversion to God demonstrated.

SERMON II.

ECCLES. xii. 1.

Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

HAVING before explain'd the exhortation in the text, which the wise man addresses to those that are young, *viz. To remember their creator in the days of their youth*; or to devote themselves early to the worship and service of God:

We are now to consider the reasons whereby this duty is enforc'd, which are plainly enough insinuated in the text, as we have before observ'd in the division of it.

Firſt, in the terms of the duty, where our relation to God, as our creator, implies the obligations we have to adore and ſerve him.

Secondly, in the words uſed to ſignify the proper time of engaging in this duty, *viz. In the days of youth; before the evil days of old age* come, *&c.* Where the fitneſs of the time of youth to enter one's ſelf into the ſervice of God, and the diſadvantage of deferring it to old age, are intimated.

Firſt then, we ſhall take a view of the reaſons that oblige us to devote our ſelves to the ſervice of God in youth, which ariſe from the relation that is between him and us, as he is our creator, and we are his creatures: and this in that large and comprehenſive ſenſe we have given of the term *creator*, by which we have laid the ground-work of our preſent reaſoning.

1. As God is our creator and preſerver, we derive from him our being, and the whole duration of it; that is, the whole of our time: therefore,

(1.) He has an equitable claim to us as long as we have a being, and to our youth by conſequence: 'tis but juſt that what we receive from his hand, ſhould be again offer'd to him; that ſince we live by his good will, we ſhould live to his glory. Can we aſſign any portion of our time, which we do not equally derive from our creator with the reſt of it? Why then ſhould any of thoſe moments that are allotted us by his mere favour, be

be injuriouſly withdrawn from his ſervice, and abus'd to his diſhonour?

The great God, whoſe chief end in all he does is his own glory, becauſe that is the beſt and moſt excellent end of all, made us, and continues our being for his own pleaſure and glory. Therefore to alienate any part of our time from him, is to oppoſe his deſigns, and, as much as in us lies, to endeavour to fruſtrate his end, and ſacrilegiouſly to rob him of his honour.

Nor do we only with-hold divine honour from him to whom it is due, when we neglect to employ any part of our time in the ſervice of our creator: for man being a creature that can never be altogether idle and unactive, that part of our lives, or portion of our time which we divert from the proper end for which it is allow'd us, is not only ſtolen from God, but devoted to the ſervice of ſin. 'Tis to ſnatch away a ſacrifice from the altar of the true God, and immediately to offer it to the worſt of idols. How provoking muſt this needs be to that God, who is ſo jealous of his glory, that he *will not give it to any other*[i]! much leſs will he ſuffer it, with impunity, to be given to ſin, which is infinitely oppoſite to his holy nature, and which he therefore hates with a perfect hatred.

No wonder then that he requires the whole ſucceſſion of our time to be devoted

[i] Iſa. 42. 8. chap. 48. 11.

to himſelf, and that *whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we ſhould do it to his glory*[k]; making that the chief end of all our actions, which is the end of our being, and of its continuance. And this ſeem'd ſo highly reaſonable to the pſalmiſt, that after a long meditation on the works of the great creator, it influences him to a firm reſolution to honour and worſhip the author of his being thro'out the whole courſe of his time: *I will ſing unto the Lord*, ſays he, *as long as I live; I will ſing praiſe unto my God, while I have my being*[l].

Now if the whole of our time be the property of our creator, not given us to ſquander away as we pleaſe, but lent us to improve to his honour; then he may juſtly claim our youth to be dedicated to his ſervice: if he is the proprietor of the whole of our time, as we have prov'd he is, in that he is our creator, he has a right to each part of it: if we with-hold from him the ſervice of our youth, we detain a part of our time from him, who has a natural right to the whole of it. And that part of time, when once elaps'd, being irrevocable, there remains but a part of the whole to offer; and we can then only render to the great author of our being, a defective and mutilous ſacrifice. And,

(2.) As our youth belongs to our maker, as a part of that time, of which the ſum

[k] 1 Cor. 10. 31. [l] Pſal. 104. 33. Pſal. 146. 2.

total

total is his due, ſo it is his propriety as it is the firſt-fruits of that time, the ſucceſſion of which we enjoy by his mere favour and bounty. To be ſerv'd firſt, is conſidered as a token of honour and reſpect amongſt men; how reaſonably then does the infinite dignity of our creator, join'd to the obligations we owe him, as ſuch, claim at our hands an humble and ſolemn dedication of that part of our time eſpecially to himſelf, which he firſt beſtows, and in which he firſt renders us capable of offering him ſervice? The ſacred hiſtorian of the creation, repreſenting the ſanctification of the ſabbath, as immediately ſucceeding the creation of man, the laſt of God's works on the laſt of his working-days, ſeems to ſignify the obligation we are all under to conſecrate our youth, the firſt-fruits of our time, to the ſervice of the author of our being: and that as the firſt day our firſt parents liv'd after their creation, was eſpecially ſacred to God, as an oblation of the firſt-fruits of their time; ſo we their poſterity, ought to devote our youth to our maker, and to ſerve him, as ſoon as we are capable of knowing him. Righteous *Abel* pay'd an acceptable homage to his creator, by preſenting him a ſacrifice of the firſtlings of his flock [m]. And as the firſt-fruits of the holy-land were yearly conſecrated to God as the great creator and ſovereign proprietor of it [n]; ſo his right over his creatures was alſo

[m] Gen. 4. 4.

[n] Exod. 22. 29. ch. 23. 19.

antiently acknowledg'd, by the dedication of the firſt-born both of men and cattle to his ſervice °. All which certainly is written for our inſtruction, and may fairly enough be apply'd to our preſent purpoſe: for if God has a ſpecial right to the firſt of all we have, as theſe antient inſtitutions ſeem to ſignify, then he may reaſonably challenge the firſt of our time, as having a peculiar title to that part, by the dedication of which we acknowledge we are indebted to him for the whole; and the refuſal of which is an implicit aſſertion of our independency on him, as if we owed only to ourſelves our own being, and our time, which is the duration of it.

So that they think very prepoſterouſly, who count the time of youth the moſt unſeaſonable of all for the ſervice of God; when 'tis evident, that if it were allowable to ſubtract any part of our time from him, as it is not, yet, of all the parts of it, it would be the moſt indecent and diſreſpectful to withhold from him this of youth, taken in a large ſenſe, not only to contain childhood, but all the flower of our time; becauſe he not only claims a right to it, as 'tis a part of our time, the whole of which is deriv'd from him, but as it is that peculiar part of it, which ought to be dedicated to him as an homage, whereby we acknowledge the obligation he has laid us under for the whole he is pleas'd to allow us. Nor has our creator a more rea-

° Exod. 13. 2, 12.

ſonable

ſonable claim to our youth, as his peculiar, becauſe 'tis the firſt part, than he has,

(3.) Becauſe 'tis alſo the beſt part of our time, wherein the faculties of the ſoul have ordinarily no leſs gracefulneſs and vigour, than the members of the body have beauty and ſtrength; wherein we are moſt capable of engaging in any great undertaking, and poſſeſs ſuitable advantages for the accompliſhment of it, as we ſhall have occaſion hereafter to ſhew more at large. 'Tis then but juſt, that he that made us what we are, ſhould have the beſt of what we have. If he has a right to all our time in general, becauſe we receive it all from his hand, he has a peculiar right to the beſt of our time, as that which his own infinite excellency, and his great goodneſs to us, direct us to conſecrate to him, as moſt proper for an offering. Why has our maker ordinarily adorn'd youth with ſo many delectable flowers, with ſo much ſtrength and agility of body, and comelineſs of form, ſuch a capacity of memory, and quickneſs of fancy, ſuch a readineſs of perception, and vivacity of ſpirit? Why has he crown'd it with ſo many advantageous qualities, but to indicate by theſe preparations, that he has deſign'd it for a ſpecial ſacrifice? The word uſed in our text and elſewhere for youth [p], properly ſignifies the choice of our time, our ſelect or choſen time, and does import not only that

[p] בחר בחורתיך *elegit*, vel *ſelegit*.

our creator chuſes that part of our time for himſelf, but that it has ſeveral advantages that render it the moſt eligible; that 'tis in itſelf the moſt fit to be choſen, and ſet apart for his ſervice.

'Tis therefore to offer a great indignity to our creator, to refuſe him the prime of our time, on pretence that we'll offer him our decrepid age, the worſt of our days, and the very dregs of 'em; as if he were unworthy of the beſt part of what he has given us; as if we could offer any thing beyond his deſerts, who has given us our all; nay, as if the devil, the world, and our own corrupt inclinations, were more worthy objects of worſhip, than the ever bleſſed God who has made us: as if he were to be poſtpon'd to the vileſt and moſt deteſtable of all idols; as if both the firſt and beſt of what we have ought to be devoted to theſe; and as if the lame and blind and maim'd were the only ſacrifices becoming his altar.

The prieſts under the law were conſecrated in their youth [q], and continued in the ſervice of the ſanctuary only to that age wherein 'tis ordinary for natural ſtrength viſibly to abate; to ſignify that that part of our time, wherein we are moſt capable of ſerving our maker, ought eſpecially to be devoted to him as the moſt acceptable portion of our days. And is it not fit that he that has made us for himſelf, ſhould have

[q] Numb. 8. 24, 25.

the

the beſt of our ſervice? that the ſtrength of our bodies ſhould be dedicated to him that moulded and compos'd them? and that the powers of our ſouls ſhould, in their moſt flouriſhing and vigorous ſtate, be offer'd to the great author of all our faculties? Ought not the moſt attentive regards of our underſtandings to be employ'd in contemplating him that has made us rational, and the moſt ſprightly and eager ſallies of our wills to be directed towards him who has made us deſiring creatures? Certainly as God is our maker, he deſerves as well as requires that we moſt ſeriouſly contemplate, and moſt intenſely love him, on the account both of his own infinite perfections, and of the emanations of his goodneſs toward us his creatures; and conſequently that we improve the beſt of our time in thoſe holy exerciſes of meditating on him, and aſpiring after him.

2. As the notion of *creator* includes, that upon the ſuppoſition of man's fall by ſin, God alone is able to perform this mighty work of reforming or new-creating him; and as the manner of the uſe of this term in the holy ſcripture intimates alſo his willingneſs ſo to do, as we have ſhewn at large before: this farther ſhews the reaſon we have to devote our youth to his ſervice. And this conſideration renews and redoubles the force of the former reaſons: for *what is man*, fallen man, *that God ſhould be mindful of him?*

him? and the son of man that he should visit him[r]? What great grace has the great God manifested to us, that when we had forfeited all the blessings to be expected of him as our creator, in rebelliously casting off that natural obligation we were under to obey him, he should neither make us cease to be his creatures, and intirely dissolve that relation, by forsaking the work of his hands, or annihilating us; nor vindicate his injur'd authority, by upholding our being only to render us miserable, and by treating us as his enemies rather than as the objects of his favour; but on the contrary that he should still shew respect to us as the works of his hands, by preserving our being, by exercising patience and long-suffering toward us, by encompassing us with many temporal favours, and by opening and *consecrating a new and living way*[f], whereby we might return to him, by proposing to us terms of peace and reconciliation *by the blood of the cross*[s]; and by offering to *renew us in the spirit of our minds*[t]: in a word, to make us *new creatures after his own image*[v]; that so we might be not only again intitled to those former lost blessings, that were naturally suited to obedient creatures of that order and rank of being wherein God had plac'd us at the beginning; but might have our happiness

[r] Psal. 8. 4.
[f] Heb. 10. 20.
[s] Col. 1. 20.
[t] Eph. 4. 23.
[v] Col. 3. 10.

highly improv'd, as well as effectually ſecur'd by that new and nearer relation to God thro' Jeſus Chriſt, which intereſts them that believe in his name in thoſe unconceivable joys which he has merited: upon which account our creator treats thoſe that are thus reconcil'd to him, not only as his creatures but as his children; and ſince his only begotten Son, *whom he hath appointed heir of all things* [u], *is not aſham'd to call them brethren* [w], he refuſes not to treat 'em as *joint-heirs with him* [x], nor diſdains to be call'd their father.

So that the conſideration of God, as the author of this new and ſpiritual creation, lays on us the ſtrongeſt obligation imaginable to ſerve and obey him, in that it contains both the higheſt reaſon and the ſtrongeſt motive of that obedience: for as it is very reaſonable that we ſhould obey him that has wiſdom and power enough to change and reform, and render happy ſuch ſinful, deprav'd and miſerable creatures as we are, ſo 'tis the greateſt good that can be done us, and therefore is to be earneſtly ſought at the hands of the infinitely gracious God: and ſeeing he is ſo liberal as to offer *to give his holy ſpirit* [y], the principle of all grace and ſpiritual life, *to them that* ſincerely *ask* and diligently ſeek it of him; here is the greateſt motive and encouragement to engage us in his ſervice, ſince, I ſay, he is not be-

[u] Heb. 1. 2.
[w] Heb. 2. 11, 12, 13.
[x] Rom. 8. 15, 16, 17.
[y] Luke 11. 13.

come

come inexorable by our sins, but still *waits to be gracious* to us [z], offering to *write his law in our hearts* [a], *and to put his fear into our inward parts* [b], by the power of his spirit, and also assuring us, that *in keeping his commandments there is great reward* [c].

If therefore the first and best part of our time is God's peculiar claim as he has made us, much more ought we to offer the first-fruits of our time to the service of him who is become reconcilable to us in Christ Jesus, and is both able and willing to add to the obligation of the first, that of a second and more glorious creation. Surely we owe not only the first and best, but the whole of our time now upon a new account to our creator, since he has made such provision for our reformation, and so for our happiness, not only thro' the course of our time here, but thro' an entire eternity hereafter. Which leads me to the last thing I have to urge from the import of the term *creator*, viz.

3. As this title implies that God is the sovereign arbiter and disposer of our being, because this is a necessary consequence of that relation of creator; it carries with it a forcible argument to engage those that are young in the service of God. *Our times are in his hand* [d], who can prolong or contract them as he pleases; and we must be account-

[z] Isa. 30. 18.
[a] Jer. 31. 33.
[b] Heb. 8. 10.
[c] Psal. 19. 11.
[d] Psal. 31. 15.

able

able to him for the days he has lent us, and receive a ſentence according to our improvement or abuſe of them. How reaſonable is it, and how much for our intereſt to offer that part of our time to our creator, to which he lays his peculiar claim; nay, to conſecrate the whole of it to his ſervice; ſeeing as he is the author of our being, he has a right to the ſovereign diſpoſal of it; and if we with-hold any part of our time from him, he can fill up the remainder of our days with pain and ſorrow, or cut us off in his diſpleaſure in the midſt of our days, and force us into an eternity of anguiſh and miſery? How *terrible a thing* is it thus *to fall into the hands of the living God* [e], who, as he has made us, knows how to puniſh our diſobedience with all the kinds and degrees of torment of which he has made, or can make our nature capable! And how highly does it concern us to dedicate the bloſſoms and early fruits of our youth to his ſervice, who is able to reward our early obedience with a long and happy life here, if he pleaſes, and to fill up a whole eternity in communicating various pleaſures to the ſoul in another and better world; who knows all the kinds and degrees of joy and ſolace of which we either are or can be capable, and how to give us the moſt raviſhing delights, and to excite in our ſouls the moſt lively ſentiments of that joy which is *unſpeakable and full of glory* [f]!

[e] Heb. 10. 31. [f] 1 Pet. 1. 8.

How

How much does it concern us to offer to the author of our being, the ſacrifice of the prime portion of our age, ſeeing he is able either eternally to ſuſtain our bodies and ſouls, by his almighty hand, from ſinking into nullity, amidſt the everlaſting torments of hell, that ſo our woe and miſery, ten thouſand times worſe than annihilation, may become eternal too! Or can uphold our being by his everlaſting arms, ſo as to give us the ſtrength and beauty of an eternal youth both in ſoul and body, and to entertain us with the uninterrupted views of his divine countenance, and with the conſtant emanations of his infinite love! Who can entertain the ſoul with continual impreſſions of the higheſt joy, without the diſſolution or enfeebling of her being, or any faculty that belongs to it! for he that has created us is the ſovereign diſpoſer of what he has made; and to him 'tis poſſible to make men even to *ſee his face and live* [g].

Nor is this duty of dedicating our youth to the ſervice of our creator, as that character involves his power to diſpoſe of us as to happineſs or miſery, as he pleaſes, barely to be argued from that awful and ſtupendous power and authority; but alſo from the manifeſt diſcovery our creator has made in this caſe, as well of his will and pleaſure, as of his right and power. For he has declar'd, that *the wicked ſhall not live out half their*

[g] Exod. 33. 20. 1 Cor. 13. 12. 1 John 3. 2.

days,

days [h], and that *they ſhall die before their time* [i]; that *it ſhall not be well with the wicked, neither ſhall he prolong his days, becauſe he feareth not before God* [k]. And he has added a promiſe to the fifth precept of his law, *which is the firſt command with promiſe* [l], of a long and happy life to thoſe that ſhew an early piety by their obedience and reſpect to their natural parents, the inſtruments of their production, as an inſtance of their reſpect to their heavenly father, the original author of their being. As the apoſtle well expreſſes it, *Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour thy father and mother, which is the firſt commandment with promiſe, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayeſt live long on the earth* [m]. And tho God in the wiſe and myſterious way of his providence, makes ſome exceptions from theſe general rules of extending or contracting the time of men in this world, ſometimes ſuffering an *accurſed ſinner to live an hundred years* [n], and an early convert to die betimes: yet if the vices committed in youth be impenitently perſiſted in, that an eternal ſtate of miſery will be the dreadful conſequence of it; as on the other hand, that our creator not only can, but certainly will reward the early conſecration of our time to him, with an eternal ſtate of

[h] Pſal. 55. 23.
[i] Eccl. 7. 17.
[k] Eccl. 8. 13.
[l] Exod. 20. 12.
[m] Eph. 6. 1, 2, 3.
[n] Iſa. 65. 20.

bliſs,

bliss, cannot be doubted by such as read and give credit to the scriptures of truth. For as a multitude of threatnings contain'd therein give assurance of the former, so the latter is no less confirmed by variety of great and precious promises; which, if they ascertain glory to all the saints in general, must not only comprehend those that were sanctified betimes, but may reasonably raise their hopes to expect a distinguishing reward.

And because the title of creator comprehends that of a judge, 'tis probable that Solomon, after a caution to youth against sin, because of the certainty of the future judgment of God [o], brings in the words of our text by way of argument upon it, *therefore remember thy creator*, &c. as we have before shewn it might have been translated, *i. e.* because he that has made thee, has a right to dispose of thy being, and will judge thee.

So that how well soever it fares with the wicked in this world, we may conclude with the wise man, *tho a sinner do evil an hundred times*, q. d. how often soever he repeats his sins, *and his days be prolonged*; *yet*, says he, *surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, that fear before him* [p]; and that implies a woe unto the harden'd sinner, and that, as the prophet *Isaiah* speaks, *it shall be ill with him*; *for the reward of his hands shall be given him* [q].

[o] Eccl. 11. 9.
[p] Eccl. 8. 12.
[q] Isa. 3. 11.

From

From the reaſons included in the term *creator*, wherein our relation to God, as his creatures, implies we are under great obligations to remember, to love, and ſerve him early, we paſs,

Secondly, to the arguments inſinuated in thoſe words, which expreſs the proper time of engaging in this duty, *viz. in the days of youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when we ſhall ſay, we have no pleaſure in them*; wherein the advantages that attend the time of youth, and the contrary evils and impediments that accompany old age, which render the former the far more eligible time in which to begin to devote one's ſelf to the ſervice of God, are ſuggeſted. Which advantages on the one hand, and diſadvantages on the other, we are now to conſider.

1. Then it behoves us to dedicate ourſelves betimes to the ſervice of our creator, becauſe the work of converſion is much more eaſily perform'd in youth than in old age. And ſeeing there is a neceſſity of our turning to God once in our lives, or elſe we become irrecoverably miſerable; prudence directs to the choice of the beſt time for ſo weighty a purpoſe. The wiſe man tells us, *God has made every thing beautiful in its ſeaſon*[r], and that *there is a fit time for every purpoſe under the heaven*[s]; and if all wiſe men are careful to chuſe a convenient ſeaſon for the common

[r] Eccl. 3. 11.
[s] Eccl. 3. 1—10.

affairs of the world, that relate only to their temporal intereſt, how prodigious a piece of folly muſt it be for a man to ſuffer the fitteſt ſeaſon to eſcape him for the performance of that work, which is the moſt difficult of all others to be well done, and upon the due accompliſhment of which, both his preſent and future happineſs depends! For,

(1.) Youth is the beſt time for our converſion; becauſe the ſoul is not then ſo much vitiated by evil habits, as when ſhe has run thro' the ſeveral ſtages of life in a continued courſe of wickedneſs. Tho ſin is deeply enough rooted in our nature, which is all defil'd with the original ſtain; yet we very much fortify our corrupt inclinations by producing them into act; and by multiplying thoſe ſinful acts, till they become familiar and cuſtomary to us, and till we *drink down iniquity like water* [s]: ſo that the difficulty of turning from ſin encreaſes together with the time of our continuance in the practice of it. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his ſpots? then may ye alſo do good, that are accuſtomed to do evil*, ſays the prophet [t]. Is it to be thought that converſion to God is ſo ſlight and eaſy a matter, that any time may ſerve for its accompliſhment? Are not the difficulties that a long habit of ſinning will lay in the way of that great and important work to be fear'd? is it not much more eaſy to bend a young twig than an

[s] Job 15. 16. | [t] Jer. 13. 23.

aged

aged oak, and to prevent evil habits than to rectify 'em? A little obſervation of the world may ſuffice to inform us, that long cuſtom or habit is ſo bewitching a thing, that ſcarce any thing can be imagin'd more ridiculous, abſurd, and inconvenient, than divers modes and actions, which yet the long uſage of ſome perſons, nay of ſome whole nations, has authoriz'd.

And if men are ſo tenacious of any ſilly and troubleſom thing to which they have been much addicted, and ſacrifice their reaſon, their honour, and their eaſe to the tyranny of cuſtom; how much more prevalent muſt a long habit and courſe of ſin be, which, beſides its deep rooting in our nature, and beſides the ordinary force of mere habit, has both its flattering promiſes and pleaſures to tempt us to its embraces, and its threats and terrors too, in ſuggeſting all the mortifying circumſtances of a virtuous courſe of life, to raiſe in our minds the moſt frightful idea of piety and religion? So that, if cuſtom and habit in general be proverbially ſtyl'd a ſecond nature [u], the habit of ſin may of all others moſt fitly be ſo term'd: and the force of its dominion over our ſouls, and the difficulty of its extirpation out of them, muſt needs have an increaſe proportionate to the time of its duration in them. Can any thing then be more evident, than that, in the days of our youth, when ſin has not yet ſo deeply

[u] Ἐγχωρίζον ἔθος φύσεως κρατιστεύον ἐστί.

rooted itſelf in our hearts by evil habits, as in old age after a long courſe of vice, in a multitude of repeated acts, our converſion muſt needs have the moſt eaſy and kindly accompliſhment?

(2.) This farther appears, in that the minds of the young are ordinarily the moſt capable of inſtruction. It was a ſaying of a philoſopher, that *to cure a dead man, and teach an old man, are things equally difficult* [v]: for, tho in ſome reſpects youth is ſufficiently addicted to pride, yet there is a kind of natural modeſty and becoming humility often diſcernible in the young, ariſing from a conſciouſneſs of their ignorance, and unexperience of things, which diſpoſes them to a more docile frame of mind, than is uſually to be found in elder perſons, whoſe maturity of age often makes 'em unwilling to be inform'd, eſpecially in matters of religion, either becauſe they imagine they already know what others may pretend to teach 'em, or becauſe they are unwilling to undergo the ſhame of being accounted ſo long ignorant of religion, and their concern therein, with which every one ought to be early acquainted. And upon this account, 'tis likely, our Saviour tells his diſciples, that *except* they ſhould *humble themſelves and become as little children*, they ſhould *not enter into the king-*

[v] Νεκρὸν ἰατρεύειν, ἢ γέροντα παιδεῦσαι, ταυτόν ἐστι. *Diog. Laert. Lib. 6.*

dom

dom of heaven [x]; i. e. unleſs they ſhould imitate children in modeſty and lowlineſs of mind, that the ſenſe of their ignorance might make 'em teachable.

Beſides, the minds of youth are generally a much fitter ſoil for truth, than thoſe of the aged, becauſe not uſually ſo over-run with the briars and thorns of ſtrong and deeply-rooted prejudices. The ſoul of man will not long remain empty; if it be not early ſtor'd with truth, 'twill be gradually ſtuff'd with errors. And as 'tis much more troubleſom to alter and correct a writing full of nonſenſe and confuſion, by much razing out and interlining, than to write a handſom piece of good-ſenſe on a blank paper; ſo it is abundantly harder to inſtruct or rectify a mind long prepoſſeſs'd with falſhood, than to make deep impreſſions of truth on a ſoul more ſimple and unprejudic'd; which, if empty of knowledge, yet is not fill'd with error, which as it has not yet learn'd to judge right of things, ſo neither has it been much us'd to judge wrong; and if not happy enough to be well-ſtock'd with good notions, yet is not ſo unhappy as to be crouded with bad ones.

Now ſeeing to capacitate us to ſerve God who *is a ſpirit* [y], and therefore will be ſerv'd *with our ſpirits* [z], without which *bodily exerciſe profiteth little* [a], there are many great

[x] Mat. 18. 3, 4.
[y] John 4. 24.
[z] Rom. 1. 9.
[a] 1 Tim. 4. 8.

truths to be learned; and tho he has promis'd the help of his holy ſpirit to reveal theſe to the ſimple [b], yet ſeeing he requires us to be diligent in the inveſtigation of truth [c], and very attentive to the voice of reaſon and ſcripture to that end [d], 'tis eaſy to ſee, by reflecting on what has been juſt now ſaid, that the young, whoſe minds are yet unform'd, have a mighty advantage above the aged for learning the knowledge of the ways of God, and for obtaining a more copious and ſolid underſtanding of truth: ſo that we may well ſay with the prophet, tho perhaps he ſpeaks in another ſenſe, *Whom ſhall he teach knowledge? and whom ſhall he make to underſtand doctrine? Them that are wean'd from the milk, and drawn from the breaſts* [e].

(3.) Again, there is a certain tenderneſs of ſpirit attending our firſt years, and not ordinarily to be found afterwards, which renders converſion more feaſible. The heart is more malleable, and more eaſily receives impreſſions from the promiſes and threatnings recorded in the word of God, and from the mercies and judgments diſtributed in the world by his providence. Therefore we find few perſons, whoſe education has given them any tolerable means of the knowledge of divine things, who do not remember themſelves to have been much affected in their

[b] Prov. 8.
[e] Pſal. 4. 4.
[d] John 5. 39.
[c] Iſa. 28. 9.

youth

youth in attending to the word of God, or in obſerving ſome remarkable paſſages of his providence. If deep conviction is a great ſtep toward converſion, experience ſhews this is moſt eaſily wrought on one that is young: how often do we ſee ſuch a one weep at a tranſient glance on death and judgment, in a ſermon, or at a general reflection on the ſufferings of Chriſt for ſinners, while the ſeared conſciences of thoſe that have been long harden'd in ſin, hold proof againſt the moſt pathetick and awakening diſcourſes of the certainty of death, the diſmal circumſtances that attend a ſinner at the approach of it, and the great conſequences that depend on that amazing change, or againſt the moſt lively deſcription of the moſt cruel and unexampled ſufferings with which our bleſſed Saviour was tormented for our redemption? That makes no impreſſion on the adamantine heart of the latter, which is often found to effect a deep compunction of mind in the former; and the eyes of the one can hardly be kept open by a diſcourſe that diſſolves thoſe of the other into tears. The affections of fear and hope, joy, ſorrow, compaſſion, and the like, more eaſily move the tender and ductile minds of youth, and conſequently make way for laſting impreſſions of piety, to the purpoſes of which theſe affections, when guided and regulated by an enlighten'd mind, do mightily conduce.

(4.) The zeal and resolution in which the warm temper of youth engages them, for what they embrace, renders a thorow conversion to God more easy to them than to the old; who by having either tasted much of the afflictions of the world themselves, or by having been witnesses to the miseries of many others, often retain so terrible an idea of worldly troubles, that the mortification and self-denial prescrib'd to the followers of Christ, gives them a strange disgust for a strictly religious life: besides, the abatement of their natural heat and vigor, a good degree of which is useful to any great enterprize, makes them with the sluggard continually complain of *a lion in the way* [f]. But the young, who have not been so baulk'd with disappointments, nor felt or seen so many miseries, and who have also a great sense of honour, and are commonly ambitious of high atchievements, and disdain to have their attempts defeated, are hereby dispos'd more readily to take up the cross of Christ, and to *fight the good fight of faith, that they may lay hold on eternal life* [g]. Add to this, that that disease of covetousness, which so often attends the aged, who from experience either in themselves or others, of the difficulty of getting and keeping, and the danger of losing, and the inconveniency of wanting the things of this world, become more tenacious of them then when they are

[f] Prov. 22. 13. | [g] 1 Tim. 6. 12.

neareſt

neareſt the unavoidable neceſſity of parting with them; that this diſeaſe, I ſay, which is *the root of all evil* [h], *which is idolatry* [i], and therefore oppoſite to the true ſervice of God, and which renders it almoſt *impoſſible for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven* [k], does not ſo uſually reign among the young, who are rather apt to run into the contrary extreme: ſo that their motion in the ways of God is not clogg'd with this dead weight, which ſo mightily incumbers thoſe whoſe hearts have taken deeper root in the earth. Thus we ſee how much more eaſy the work of converſion is likely to be, when we engage in it in our tender years, than if we defer it to old age.

But all this while I would not be thought to make the work of converſion, conſider'd as the act of God, who alone can *turn* a ſoul *from darkneſs to light, and from the power of ſatan to himſelf* [l], to be more difficult in one ſubject than another, for all things are equally poſſible to him: but I have hereby made an eſſay to ſhew that the heart of an old ſinner is a ſubject much more untractable and obſtinate in itſelf, than that of one, who, by reaſon of his youth, is yet but a novice in vice; that the work of mortification and ſanctification is commonly begun with leſs difficulty, and carried on with more eaſe and ſpeed, on the young than on the old; and that

[h] 1 Tim. 6. 10.
[i] Col. 3. 5.
[k] Mat. 19. 24, 25, 26.
[l] Acts 26. 18.

a greater degree of grace is neceſſary to reform the latter than the former: and whether the Almighty will grant ſuch an extraordinary meaſure of his grace to one that is grown old in wickedneſs, may well be doubted, as we ſhall ſhew hereafter.

Since then the work of converſion is of the greateſt conſequence, as it is for our trueſt intereſt both in this world and that to come, certainly it ought to be perform'd in youth, ſeeing that is the fitteſt ſeaſon for it: as will farther appear,

2. In that much good is loſt, and much evil contracted by deferring our converſion to old age; but much evil, on the contrary, is prevented, and much good obtain'd, thro' the courſe of our days, by early turning to God.

(1.) Much ſin is prevented, and conſequently much ſpiritual good obtain'd by an early converſion, which will appear to be no ſmall advantage: for ſeeing ſin, as it is directly oppoſite to the pure nature of God, is the worſt of evils, and ſeeing the excellency or vileneſs of a creature is to be meaſur'd by its likeneſs or contrariety to God, who poſſeſſes abſolute perfection in himſelf; it neceſſarily follows, that nothing can ſo deform a creature, nothing can ſo defile it, nothing can debaſe it ſo much, and ſet it at ſo great a diſtance from excellency and perfection, as ſin does. It muſt then certainly be our intereſt to break off our ſins by an early repentance;

pentance; ſince every ſinful act, and much more a continuance in a courſe of ſin, does ſo much corrupt, debaſe, and deform the ſoul. And if we deſire the meliorating of our nature, and would become more excellent creatures than we are, inſtead of degenerating and becoming worſe; it highly concerns us to begin early to extirpate that which has ſtripp'd the ſoul of much of her intellectual, and, which is worſe, of her moral excellency, and will render her by ſo much the more vile, by how much the longer we indulge it; and to devote ourſelves betimes to religion and holineſs, which is the principal beauty and glory of a rational ſoul, and that which chiefly makes a man reſemble his creator.

(2.) Much ſorrow and trouble is hereby prevented, and much joy and pleaſure obtain'd and ſecur'd. For tho ſome examples may be found of wicked men, who in reſpect of their temporal proſperity for a little time, may be ſaid to *ſpread themſelves like a green bay-tree* [m]; *not to be in trouble like other men, and to have more than heart could wiſh* [n]: yet God does not leave himſelf without witneſs of his diſpleaſure againſt ſin, in that he often *wounds the heads of his enemies, and the hairy ſcalps of them that go on ſtill in their treſpaſſes* [o], by ſignal judgments even in this world, as all places and ages can teſtify.

[m] Pſal. 37. 35.
[n] Pſal. 73. 5, 6, 7, &c.
[o] Pſal. 68. 21.

Nor

Nor has the divine providence been wanting to ſignalize the righteous by frequent inſtances of peculiar temporal bleſſings, which it has conferr'd on them. However, the anguiſh of a guilty and ſelf-accuſing conſcience, under which the wicked often labour, together with the common and unavoidable afflictions of this world, which make a very deep impreſſion on them, whoſe appetites are fierce and eager after ſenſual pleaſure, their hope being only in this life, and whoſe paſſions ſoon fall into a violent ferment, becauſe they want the holy art of allaying the heat of them by ſerious reflections on the ſovereignty, juſtice, wiſdom, and goodneſs of that God, whoſe providence governs the univerſe: theſe things, I ſay, occaſion them abundance of grief and trouble, which one that becomes an early convert to holineſs avoids; who beſides the joyous teſtimony of a good conſcience, that gives a reliſh to all his temporal comforts, and takes away the ſting of all his outward trials, is ſo mortified to this world, and rais'd ſo far above the intereſts of it, by a lively hope of eternal bliſs; and is ſo thorowly convinc'd of the good conduct of the divine governor of the world, that he finds no ſuch great reluctancy in himſelf to ſubmit to the will of God, when he is pleas'd to afflict him. In a word, if it be both *an evil and a bitter thing* [p], to go on in a courſe of ſin; and if all God's *ways are*

[p] Jer. 2. 19.

ways

ways of pleaſantneſs, and all his paths are peace [q]; it muſt needs be a mighty advantage to enter betimes into a walk ſo ſweet and delightful.

3. The evils of old age, if we arrive to that, are aggravated by deferring converſion till then; but alleviated and render'd tolerable by an early piety. If he that neglects in the time of his youth and ſtrength to make proviſion for the time of age and ſickneſs, when he has a fair opportunity of doing it, is juſtly cenſur'd as inconſiderate and imprudent; becauſe he takes not care to prepare that which might give him ſome relief then, when many infirmities will certainly encompaſs him, and the neglect of which will inhance his miſery: then to neglect to turn to God in youth is a folly of the groſſeſt kind; becauſe nothing can tend ſo much to ſupport us under the preſſure of the many evils that attend old age; nothing can tend to take off ſo much of the weight of that burden, as an early converſion; and nothing can make thoſe miſeries ſo grievous, as the neglect of it. For,

(1.) By an early converſion, a large ſtock of grace, and of experience, is treaſur'd up, which mightily ſtrengthens the ſoul under the burden of age: a long habit of mortification to ſenſual things, will render carnal pleaſures inſipid; and he that *dies daily* [r] to the world, in the time of youth, when it

[q] Prov. 3. 17. [r] 1 Cor. 15. 31.

appears

appears moſt amiable and charming, will not feel much regret in his mind, when he finds old age has almoſt quite taken away the reliſh of thoſe periſhing ſweets; ſince reaſon and religion had long before allay'd the keeneſs of his appetite to them. The long and good uſe he has made of his ſpiritual ſenſes, makes him patient under the decay of his natural ones. What tho, as Solomon phraſes it, *the keepers of the houſe tremble, and the ſtrong men bow themſelves* [s]; *and fears be in the way* [r]? &c. How can this make him unhappy, whoſe *inward man has been renew'd day by day*, even before *his outward man decay'd* [t]; who therefore is become *ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might* [u], which *ſtrengthens the weak hands, and confirms the feeble knees, and makes them that are of a fearful heart ſtrong* [v]? What if *thoſe that look out at the windows be darken'd* [w]? How can dimneſs, or even loſs of ſight, render him miſerable, who thro' the courſe of his life has endeavour'd to be blind to thoſe objects that might tempt him to ſin, having *made a covenant with his eyes* [x], to guard himſelf from it; and has conſtantly pray'd that God would *turn them away from beholding vanity* [y]? How can he be much concern'd at the want of natural light, who has been

[s] Eccl. 12. 3.
[r] Ver. 5.
[t] 2 Cor. 4. 16.
[u] Eph. 6. 10.
[v] Iſai. 35. 3, 4.
[w] Eccl. 12. 3.
[x] Job 31. 1.
[y] Pſal. 119. 37.

long

long accuſtom'd to ſee things that are inviſible by the piercing *eye of faith* [z]? How can he be much diſcontented at the decay of the once quick ſenſation of his palate, or at the want of appetite to his food; who has ſo often *taſted* [a], and ſtill taſtes *that the Lord is gracious* [b]? Tho *all the daughters of muſick be brought low* [c], how ſhould deafneſs be an intolerable grievance to him, who has often *heard*, and ſtill hears the *ſtill and ſmall voice* [d] of the ſpirit of God ſpeaking in his conſcience, *and teſtifying with his ſpirit that he is* one of *the children of God* [e]? How can the obſtructions that the organs of ſpeech ſuffer, which render his voice weak and unmuſical, diſcourage him, who knows, that as his praiſes and prayers have often been *melodious* [f] in the ears of God, ſo they ſtill are very pleaſant to him [g], who chiefly minds the tunable frame of the heart? And tho *the ſun and the light, and the moon and the ſtars be darken'd* [h], &c. how can the infirmities that impair the underſtanding and judgment, the fancy and memory, *&c.* be inſupportable to him, who has long underſtood the *great myſtery of godlineſs* [i], ſo as *to know the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom he has ſent, which is life eternal* [k]: who has

[z] Heb. 11. 1. and ver. 27.
[a] Pſal. 34. 8.
[b] 1 Pet. 2. 3.
[c] Eccl. 12. 4.
[d] 1 Kings 19. 12.
[e] Rom. 8. 16.
[f] Cant. 2. 14.
[g] Prov. 15. 8.
[h] Eccl. 12. 2.
[i] 1 Tim. 3. 16.
[k] John 17. 3.

receiv'd

receiv'd an indelible impression of this knowledge in his mind [l]; and has the *Law of God* deeply engraven *on his heart* [m]: and whose long experience of the divine goodness, makes him with holy confidence still say, as the apostle did, *I know whom I have believed* [n]; and as the aged psalmist, *thou art my hope, O Lord God, thou art my trust from my youth* [o]? who, however weak his memory is as to other things, yet still *remembers his creator*, and *will not forget his word* [p]. Nay, tho all the evils and infirmities of old age, which the wise man enumerates after our text, attack him, and threaten a speedy dissolution of the frame of his body, how can this despirit him, who has long *groan'd* [q] for deliverance from that *earthly tabernacle* [r], that he might be rid of those remains of sin that lurk in it; and has often wish'd that this veil of mortal flesh were rent asunder, because he knows it hinders him from *seeing God face to face*; who has so familiariz'd the grave to himself, by frequent meditations on the victory his Saviour has obtain'd over it [s], and is so well persuaded of that blessed resurrection with which his *lively hope* [t] has long acquainted him, that he can look into the gloomy *valley of the shadow of death* [u] without consternation, and chear-

[l] 1 John 5. 20.
[m] Jer. 31. 33.
[n] 2 Tim. 1. 12.
[o] Psal. 71. 5.
[p] Psal. 119. 16.
[q] Rom. 7. 24.
[r] 2 Cor. 5. 1——8.
[s] 1 Cor. 15. 54——57.
[t] 1 Pet. 1. 3.
[u] Psal. 23. 4.

fully *commit his ſpirit into the hands of God, as his faithful creator* [u]; who as *he has guided him by his counſel,* ſo, he knows, *will receive him to glory* [v]?

But on the other ſide; if converſion be deferr'd to old age, theſe and the like advantages of a long exerciſe of grace and of a large ſpiritual experience being wanting, how difficult will it be for a weak mind and a languiſhing body to bear up under thoſe preſſing miſeries that will then attend them? And it will be no ſmall affliction to a late penitent, even after his converſion, to think on his imprudent neglect of early laying up this ſpiritual proviſion, againſt thoſe evil days of age and weakneſs, when the ſoul ſtands in ſo much need of it.

(2.) An early converſion has greater characters of ſincerity and truth than a late one; and thereby adminiſters great eaſe and comfort amidſt the infirmities of age. For, as the true peace and comfort of the ſoul reſult from the good and ſafe poſture wherein ſhe finds herſelf; ſo according to the evidence or obſcurity of the proofs a man finds in himſelf of the reality of his converſion to God, the more ſtable or wavering is his hope and comfort. Now thoſe that have been converted in their youth, have uſually much clearer evidences of the truth of their converſion, than they who have been reclaim'd from ſin by a late repentance: and there-

[u] 1 Pet. 4. 19. [v] Pſal. 73. 24.

fore the joy of the former commonly far ſurpaſſes that of the latter.

How often does the diſturb'd and doubtful mind of a late penitent, thus commune with herſelf: I find indeed an unwonted ſorrow in myſelf on the account of ſin; but how ſhall I be aſſur'd that 'tis a *godly ſorrow, that works a repentance to ſalvation, not to be repented of*[w]? Is it not wholly from a fear of the evil of puniſhment, and not at all from the ſenſe of the evil of ſin? not becauſe I have violated the law of God, but only becauſe I have render'd myſelf obnoxious to the curſe of it? Is it not rather becauſe I have weaken'd my body, and haſten'd old age by my vices, than becauſe I have defil'd my ſoul, and enfeebled her powers by them? I feel in myſelf ſome abhorrence and averſion to the ſins in which I formerly took pleaſure: but is this the effect of the ſickneſs of my ſoul, or of the diſtempers of my body[x]? Do I really loath my former diſorders, and is temperance my choice? Is it not rather the weakneſs of my appetite, and the decay of my palate, that makes me abſtemious? I delight not in ſenſual mirth and jollity as formerly: but may I not juſtly queſtion, whether this does not more proceed from the weakneſs of my fancy, than from the tenderneſs of my conſcience, and the rectitude of my will? I ſeem ſomewhat mortified to the things of the world: but is

[w] 2 Cor. 7. 10. | [x] Mat. 9. 12.

not this rather a kind of natural than a moral death? a dying to the world of neceſſity and not of choice? Do I forſake it becauſe 'tis unworthy of my love; and not rather becauſe it has firſt forſaken me, and is incapable of affording me its former pleaſures, now the evil days of old age have overtaken me? I find in my ſoul an earneſt deſire after holineſs: is it becauſe I take delight in pleaſing God, or only becauſe I fear to ſuffer the weight of his diſpleaſure? Is it becauſe I have a mind to live a holy life, now when the beſt and almoſt the whole of my time is ſpent; or only that I may *die the death of the righteous, and that my laſt end may be like his*[y]? I am now willing to devote myſelf to the ſervice of God: but why have I not done it long before, when I had time and ſtrength, and other advantages with which to ſerve him? Is it not rather to ſerve a turn of my own, than to ſerve him, that I offer myſelf ſo late to his ſervice? Have I not reaſon to doubt whether I am ſincerely willing to chuſe my bleſſed lord, as my head and ruler, as well as my ſanctuary and ſaviour? And whether I am willing to be purified as well as redeem'd, to be ſanctified by his grace, as well as juſtified by his righteouſneſs? *The heart is deceitful above all things*[z]; and how ſhall I be aſſur'd that I do not deceive myſelf about the ſafety of my ſoul?

[y] Numb. 23. 10. [z] Jer. 17. 9.

Theſe and the like thoughts often occaſion great heſitations in the mind of an aged convert, and make him doubt of the ſincerity of his heart, and of the ſecurity of his ſtate.

Whereas, on the other hand, he who after an initiation in the ſervice of God in youth, and a proficiency in it thro' the time of his ſtrength, is at laſt arriv'd to a good old age, may greatly ſolace himſelf in ſcanning over the marks and proofs of the truth and reality of his converſion, which are great and numerous.

He deeply mourn'd for ſin at an age when ſorrow and penſiveneſs ſeem moſt unſeaſonable in the judgment of the world; and when the warmth of the imagination and the briskneſs of the ſenſes diſpoſe moſt to carnal mirth: he loath'd ſin, when it ſeem'd moſt charming, and deny'd himſelf its ſenſual pleaſures, at an age when they have the higheſt guſt; and when their evil conſequences almoſt quite diſappear, thro' their great ſuppoſed diſtance. He forſook the world, when 'twas juſt ſpreading its charms before him, and making its court to him after the moſt obliging manner. He *hunger'd and thirſted after righteouſneſs* [a], at a time when it had the moſt affliction and bitterneſs attending it; and dedicated himſelf to God then, when he had a large proſpect of hard ſervices and ſufferings to undergo for his ſake.

[a] Mat. 5. 5.

And accordingly his life since his conversion yields a multitude of instances that prove the sincerity of it. The proof of his faith in God and of his love to him, has been like that of gold and silver in the melting furnace, amidst various temptations. He has had occasion to give ample proofs of his fidelity to the *captain of his salvation* [b], by having long warr'd under his banner: and has reason to believe himself to have been truly converted in his youth; since all the flattering sweets and pleasures of the world could never seduce him, nor all the threatning frowns and troubles of it terrify him into a change of his resolution for the service of his God. And his having held out so long, gives him hope that *he shall hold out to the end* [c]; and since he finds his faith has on it the character of *unfeigned* [d], his joy must needs abound, when he considers, that he that is the *author of that faith, is the finisher of it* too [e]; that he who long ago began, and hath long cherish'd the work of grace in his soul, *will carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ* [f]: and that as he has the evident signs of faith in the sanctification of his heart [g], so he shall have the end of it too in the salvation of his soul. And it hence follows,

(3.) That an early conversion furnishes old age with comfortable reflections on time

[b] Heb. 2. 10.
[c] Heb. 3. 14.
[d] 2 Tim. 1. 5.
[e] Heb. 12. 2.
[f] Philip. 1. 6.
[g] 1 Pet. 1. 9.

paſt; and on the contrary, the thoughts of an ill-ſpent life are then moſt grievous, when we are near the cloſe of it. What a dreadful thing muſt it be for an old man, *whoſe bones are full of the ſins of his youth* [h], to look back upon his former courſe of life! Suppoſe him a late penitent of the *eleventh hour* [i], and that God is pleas'd even then to indulge him a pardon; with what horror will he review his life! what a loathſom ſink of abominations muſt he rake into! with what innumerable evils will he ſee himſelf encompaſs'd! and with what a mighty weight will they preſs his ſoul: Is it likely that God, whom he has ſo long *wearied with his iniquities* [k], and preſs'd with his ſins, *as a cart is preſs'd with ſheaves* [l], will ſhew him mercy now, without giving him a taſte how bitter as well as how evil a thing ſin is [m]? and without ſhewing him, that if he be ſav'd, it ſhall be *ſo as by fire* [n]? Is it ſtrange if that God, to whoſe calls he has been long deaf, and from whoſe reproofs and counſels he has ſo often turned away, ſhould ſuffer him to call a while in the diſtreſs and bitterneſs of his ſoul, before he condeſcends to give him anſwer of peace?

And ſeeing it is the ordinary courſe of the almighty, when he converts men, firſt to impreſs their minds with great horror from the ſenſe of ſin, as well to make 'em loath

[h] Job 20. 11.
[i] Mat. 20. 6.
[k] Mal. 2. 17.
[l] Amos 2. 13.
[m] Jer. 2. 19.
[n] 1 Cor. 3. 15.

and

and conſequently to forſake their vices, as to make them highly value his favour, and adore his pardoning grace; it ſeems neceſſary in an ordinary way, that an old and harden'd ſinner ſhould undergo the *terror of the Lord*[o] to a high degree, becauſe the long time he has ſpent in the ſervice of ſin, gives him ſo great an occaſion of remorſe, when his conſcience is once enlighten'd and awaken'd; and becauſe to extirpate theſe long and deep habits of ſin, there is need of a kind of violent turn in the ſoul. For as the evil ſpirit tore the poor man in the [p] goſpel, when forc'd to leave him; ſo 'tis not uſual that ſin leaves a Man, of whoſe ſoul it has had a long poſſeſſion, without occaſioning great convulſions of mind, and, as it were, rending the ſoul in pieces: and how hard will this be to be endur'd, at a time when *the ſpirit of a man can* ſcarce *bear the* common *infirmities* of age? *Who* then *can bear a wounded ſpirit*[q]?

And when theſe terrors of mind are over, and theſe pangs of conſcience that give hope of a *new birth*[r] are ſucceeded with ſome peace that follows that happy change; yet who knows how far it may be allay'd, and how often interrupted by reiterated ſcruples and fears? and how long the ſoul that has been ſo violently mov'd may retain her doubtful vibrations, after ſuch aſtoniſhing

[o] 2 Cor. 5. 11.
[p] Mark 1. 26.
[q] Prov. 18. 14.
[r] John 3. 3.

impreſſions of divine wrath, in a time when even natural infirmities render the mind weak and timorous [f]; and when the king of terrors, who daily expects the aged, loudly alarms the tremulous ſoul to prepare ſpeedily to paſs into eternity, the near approach of which mighty change muſt needs add terror to every ſcruple; and when ſatan, a ſubtle adverſary, of whoſe devices, for want of experience, he is in a great meaſure ignorant [s], ſhoots his fiery and invenom'd darts [t] to weaken the hope, and to heighten the fears, and to increaſe the troubles of the ſoul? who knows, I ſay, what gloomy and dark intervals theſe things may occaſion? 'Tis true, God can ſurmount all theſe difficulties by proportionate effuſions of his grace, and can fill ſuch a ſoul, if he pleaſes, with unſpeakable joy. But is it likely that he ſhould indulge thoſe with the higheſt and moſt uncommon privileges, that hold out longeſt in rebellion againſt him? And may ſuch reaſonably expect that he will go out of his ordinary methods to meet them, who have all their life paſt gone aſtray from him? and that he will beſtow the ſealing evidences of his holy ſpirit on them to a degree which he does not always allow his early diſciples, and thoſe that have long follow'd him? May it not rather be thought, that *tho* God ſhould *forgive their iniquities, he'll take vengeance of*

[f] Eccl. 12. 5.
[s] 2 Cor. 2. 11.
[t] Eph. 6. 16.

their

their inventions [v] ? that tho they ſhould *die in the Lord* [u], they'll ſet in a cloud, and go to the grave with Hezekiah's lamentation, when under the ſenſe of the wrath of God, and under puniſhment for his ſins. *I reckon'd*, ſays he, *till morning, that as a lion he will break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. Like a crane or a ſwallow, ſo did I chatter, I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward, O Lord, I am oppreſſed, undertake for me. What ſhall I ſay? he hath both ſpoken unto me, and himſelf hath done it; I ſhall go ſoftly all my years in the bitterneſs of my ſoul* [x]. And with that of Job; *Thou writeſt bitter things againſt me, and makeſt me to poſſeſs the iniquities of my youth* [y]. Is it ſtrange, if, as they have conſum'd their time in ſin, and have grown old in wickedneſs, their *eyes* ſhould be *conſum'd with grief, and wax old with ſorrow* [z] ? and if, as they have wallow'd long in vice, ſo they ſhould be made to ſwim long in tears, and *to water their couches with* continual *weeping* [a] ?

But what a comfortable review of his life may an early convert take in old age ? what joy to look back on that ſolemn oblation of the firſt-fruits of his time which he made to God, and on the early favour which God expreſs'd to him ! to *remember the kindneſs of*

[v] Pſal. 93. 3.
[u] Rev. 14. 13.
[x] Iſa. 38. 13, 14, 15.
[y] Job 13. 26.
[z] Pſal. 6. 7.
[a] Ver. 6.

his

his youth, and the love of his espousals [b], which even God himself delights to remember! to turn over the large volumes of his experience, to look on past temptations and conflicts; these reflections will give him a pleasure as much beyond that of an antient sailor, when he thinks on the many rocks and sands and storms he has escap'd; and that of a valiant soldier, when he recollects how many dangers he has past, and how many victories he has obtain'd, as he conceives the interest of the soul is beyond that of the body, and that eternal life is to be valued above temporal. With what admiration mix'd with joy will he be fill'd, when he calls to mind what God has done for him! For tho the failings of his life, *since no man lives and sins not* [c], give him occasion of godly sorrow and humiliation, yet these will not hinder a religious joy from reigning in his soul, from his happy experience of the mercy of his God; which will make him with the apostle [d], glory *in the grace of God* in the midst of his contrition; and tho in himself *he is nothing* [e], will make him say with the psalmist, *by my God I have run thro' a troop, and by my God I have leaped over a wall* [f]! With what delight will he recollect the signal favours of the divine providence that beautify the history of his life! how his God *has*

[b] Jer. 2. 2.
[c] 2 Chron. 6. 36. Eccl. 7. 20.
[d] Rom. 7. 24, 25.
[e] 2 Cor. 12. 9, 11.
[f] Psal. 18. 29.

spread

ſpread his table, and fill'd his cup in the preſence of his enemies [g]; and has *made both his rod and his ſtaff to comfort him* [h]. With how much pleaſure will he turn his mind to the houſe of God, to think how often he has gone thither *with the voice of joy and praiſe, with the multitude that kept holiday* [i]! how oft he has *beheld the beauty of the Lord*, while he has been *inquiring in his temple* [k]! how he has been *ſtay'd with flagons, and comforted with apples*, when *ſick of love* [l] to his Saviour! how he has *ſat down with great delight under his ſhadow*, while *his fruit* has been *ſweet to his taſte* [m]! how he has been *ſatiated as with marrow and fatneſs* [n], when his ſoul has *hungred after righteouſneſs* [o]! how he has often disburden'd his mind by pouring out his complaints into the boſom of his heavenly father! how he has often receiv'd an anſwer of peace, ſometimes beyond his hope, nay beyond his deſire, and ſometimes even before his prayer [p]! what precious ſeaſons of communion with God he has enjoy'd, when retired into ſome corner alone to worſhip him! what fervent deſires he has then felt! what earneſt aſpirations of his ſoul after him! what ſmiles of the divine love have on ſuch occaſions chear'd his ſpirit! what ſealings of the holy

[g] Pſal. 23. 5.
[h] Ver. 4.
[i] Pſal. 42. 4.
[k] Pſal. 27. 4.
[l] Cant. 2. 5.
[m] Ver. 3.
[n] Pſal. 63. 5.
[o] Mat. 5. 6.
[p] Iſa. 65. 24.

ſpirit

ſpirit [q] have aſſur'd his faith! what proſpect he has had of *him that is inviſible* [r]! *what joy unſpeakable and full of glory* [s]!

Such reflections will even make the ſoul forget her temporal afflictions, and render the burden of age ſupportable. Theſe thoughts will obviate fears and temptations, and inſpire the mind with holy courage and reſolution, and furniſh her with arguments for prayer, like that of the pſalmiſt: *I will go in the ſtrength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteouſneſs, even of thine only. O God, thou haſt taught me from my youth; and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now alſo when I am old and gray-headed; O God forſake me not,* &c [s].

In a word, tho every man has occaſion to be humbled for his ſins, and that in every part of his life, it muſt needs be a great, and next to the light of God's countenance thro' the face of Jeſus Chriſt, the greateſt occaſion of joy in the world; when a man can lie down in the grave in peace, with the ſatiſfaction of having made religion the great buſineſs of his life, of having *ſerv'd his generation faithfully by the will of God* [t], having from his youth *exerciſed himſelf in this, to have a conſcience always void of offence both toward God and toward men* [v]: when at the ſhutting up of his days, he can, by the grace

[q] 2 Cor. 1. 22. Eph. 1. 13.
[r] Heb. 11. 27.
[s] 1 Pet. 1. 8.
[s] Pſal. 71. 16, 17, 18.
[t] Acts 13. 36.
[v] Acts 24. 16.

of

of God, ſafely appeal both to him and to men, as aged Samuel did; *Behold——I am old and gray-headed——and I have walk'd before you from my childhood unto this day: behold here I am; witneſs againſt me before the Lord, and before his anointed: whoſe ox have I taken? or whoſe aſs have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppreſſed? or of whoſe hand have I received any bribe, to blind my eyes therewith?* &c [u]. And as he that has ſerv'd God from his youth can look back with pleaſure, ſo he may look forward with exceeding joy. For,

(4.) An early converſion furniſhes old age with much more comfort than a late one, in that it uſually gives a brighter and more glorious proſpect of reward in the other life.

As this life is not valuable, but as it may be improv'd in order to a better; ſo the ſtrong and well-grounded hope of eternal bliſs in the world to come, is that which ſweetens the moſt bitter afflictions of a chriſtian here, and makes him as much more happy as he is *more excellent than his neighbour* [w]; whereas if his *hope were only in this life*, he would be *of all men the moſt miſerable* [x]. And a man's true happineſs in this world is therefore to be meaſur'd by the ſtrength and livelineſs of his faith and hope for the bleſſings of the other; for by theſe he receives an earneſt of the heavenly poſ-

[u] 1 Sam. 12. 2, 3.
[w] Prov. 12. 26.
[x] 1 Cor. 15. 19.

ſeſſion,

ſeſſion, and has ſome foretaſtes of that glory, with which he expects in a little time to be fully ſatisfied. For every one knows that there is pleaſure in hoping for any thing that we think will add to our happineſs, eſpecially when that hope is thought to be well-founded, and the things expected of great conſequence, and ſpeedily to be obtain'd. With what an extraordinary joy then muſt the hope of everlaſting bliſs and glory inſpire him that firmly believes he ſhall ſuddenly enjoy it! And that this hope makes a ſaint the moſt happy man even in this life is evident, ſome of the enemies of religion themſelves being judges. 'Tis worth remarking, that an eminent perſon [y], who was one of the greateſt ſinners, as well as one of the greateſt penitents of this age, even while he maintain'd his atheiſtical principles, and led a moſt flagitious courſe of life, confeſs'd, "That "whether the buſineſs of religion was true "or not, he thought thoſe who had the "perſuaſions of it, and lived ſo that they "had quiet in their conſciences, and believed God govern'd the world, and acquieſced in his providence, and had the hope "of an endleſs bleſſedneſs in another ſtate, "the happieſt men in the world: and ſaid, "he would give all that he was maſter of, "to be under thoſe perſuaſions, and to have "the ſupports and joys that muſt needs flow

[y] *The late earl of Rocheſter; ſee his life written by Dr. Burnet, p. 68.*

"from

" from them." So juſt a thought had he even then of the joy of a good conſcience, and the pleaſure which the bare expectation of future glory in heaven occaſions, that he thought it far out-ballanc'd the pleaſures of ſin, which are but for a ſeaſon. And thus does religion triumph over her enemies, extorting from their own mouths a plain acknowledgment of what the pſalmiſt aſſures, that *happy is the people whoſe God is the Lord* [z].

Now it cannot be expected, that a late convert ſhould have an equal portion of this hope and joy, with one that *has fear'd the Lord from his youth* [a]. The former is commonly exercis'd with greater and more frequent doubts concerning his intereſt in eternal glory than the latter; and the eye of his faith is often too weak to read his evidences for it; becauſe, as we have ſhewn before, he is apt to queſtion the truth of his regeneration, without which, he knows, *no man can enter into the kingdom of heaven* [b]. And this makes him often thus reaſon with himſelf: *Eye* indeed *hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither have enter'd into the heart of man the things which God hath prepar'd for them that love him* [c]: but I fear I ſhall fall ſhort of the glory of God, becauſe I queſtion the ſincerity of my love to him. Is not this *fulneſs of joy* [d] reſerv'd for them that have nauſeated

[z] Pſal. 144. 15.
[a] 1 Kings 18. 12.
[b] John 3. 3, 4, 5.
[c] 1 Cor. 2. 9.
[d] Pſal. 16. 11.

the

the pleaſures of this world, with which I have glutted my ſenſual appetite, even from my infancy? Are not thoſe rivers of pleaſure at the right hand of God, only to refreſh his diligent ſervants that have borne the burden and heat of the day in labouring and ſuffering for him? May not I, who have ſpent my days in vanity and ſin, *in rioting and drunkenneſs, in chambering and wantonneſs* [e], and who now am incapacitated either to do or ſuffer much for God, juſt at the period of my days, juſtly fear being excluded from the participation of this bliſs? Is it likely that theſe joys which are ſo ſpiritual and refined, will be poured into ſuch a ſoul as mine, when parted from this languiſhing body, which has been debauch'd and corrupted for ſo many years, with the baſe and ſordid delights of ſin? Or may I preſume to depoſit this vile and mouldering carcaſs in the grave, in hope of having it render'd a glorious body *at the reſurrection of the juſt* [f]; when I have thro' the beſt of my time abus'd it to the vileſt purpoſes of ſenſuality and vice? Shall theſe eyes that have ſo often been *full of adultery* [g] be admitted to ſee the Lord in glory? And this tongue be tun'd to praiſe him with ſacred anthems in heaven, which has ſo long lodg'd in it *a world of iniquity* [h], and deſecrated his holy name by profane oaths and blaſphemies on earth? That theſe feet that have

[e] Rom. 13. 13.
[f] Luke 14. 14.
[g] 2 Pet. 2. 14.
[h] James 3. 6.

been

been ſwift to attend the places of debauchery, and the *aſſemblies of the ungodly* [i], ſhall ſtand within the gates of the *heavenly Jeruſalem* [k], and find a welcome place in the *general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born, which are written in heaven* [l]? Or that theſe hands that have ſo long been executing acts of unrighteouſneſs here, ſhall be eternally lifted up with praiſes, and employ'd in applauding the name and works of God there?

May not I more reaſonably be afraid, that my ſoul ſhould fall *into the hands of the living God* [m], than chearfully commit it to him [n], now my days are near expiring? and juſtly apprehend that the expence of my time in wickedneſs will be puniſhed with an eternity of miſery? and that after I have ſo long walk'd in the ways of ſin, I muſt now at laſt lie down in the grave in ſorrow [o]? And O how pungent is that ſorrow, while my trembling ſoul looks into the conſequences of ſuch a death! for, if I die in my ſins, not only am I depriv'd of all this happineſs, which I have been viewing at a diſtance, but muſt ſink into that abyſs of miſery, where a *never-dying worm* [p], and an *unquenchable lake of fire* [q] are the juſt and dreadful rewards of a ſinful life.

[i] Pſal. 1. 1.
[k] Pſal. 122. 2.
[l] Heb. 12. 22, 23.
[m] Heb. 10. 31.
[n] 1 Pet. 4. 19.
[o] Iſa. 50. 11.
[p] Mark 9. 44.
[q] Rev. 20. 14, 15.

Theſe and ſuch like jealouſies and fears, carry ſo ſpecious an appearance of reaſon with them, that without a more than common meaſure of faith, they muſt needs give the ſoul a great deal of diſquiet. And 'tis no wonder if the righteous and holy God ſuffer the mind often to labour under theſe troubleſome thoughts, as a proper method both to embitter ſin to one that has been long accuſtomed to indulge it, and to teſtify for the incouragement of holineſs, that he reſerves ſome peculiar rewards even in this life, for them that have ſerv'd him with a peculiar zeal and conſtancy; and that *full aſſurance of faith* and hope [r], and a clear proſpect of thoſe *inviſible* things [s] *which he has laid up for thoſe that love him*, is a bleſſing wherewith he ſeldom crowns any but thoſe who have been for ſome conſiderable part of their lives, gradually raiſing *their affections*, and fixing them *on things above* [s], habituating themſelves to converſe in heaven, and *fighting the good fight of faith, that they might lay hold on eternal life* [t]. For ſince God is pleas'd to propoſe rewards as motives to his ſervice, 'tis natural to conclude, that the conſolating hope of theſe rewards, which is alſo a reward itſelf, does ordinarily bear proportion to the time and degree of our obedience: and therefore he that has long devoted himſelf to the ſervice of God, as he has commonly a clearer

[r] Heb. 10. 22. Heb. 6. 11.
[s] Col. 3. 2.
[t] Heb. 11. 1.
[t] 1 Tim. 6. 12.

proſpect

proſpect of future bliſs, and of the ſecurity of his intereſt in it; ſo to advance his joy ſtill to a higher point, he has reaſon to expect a diſtinguiſhing reward in the celeſtial glory; that if he has ſerv'd his Lord much in his church, which is his *kingdom on earth*, he ſhall not be *the leaſt in the kingdom of heaven* [u]: for tho he has no ground to hope to be rewarded for his works on the account of debt, becauſe when he has done his beſt *he is but an unprofitable ſervant* [v]; yet, ſince God himſelf has promiſed it, he may believe, that he ſhall be rewarded according to his works, on the account of grace [w]. Thus as the early convert looks back upon all the ſufferings he has endur'd for the ſake of his divine maſter with comfort, *as on waters that are paſt away* [x]; ſo the thoughts of theſe raiſe both his deſire and expectation earneſtly to look for a diſtinguiſhing recompence of future glory.

And how unexpreſſible is that joy which a holy man feels, when the eye of faith can with a great degree of ſtrength penetrate, and with equal ſteadineſs contemplate the unſeen glories of the heavenly ſtate, as firmly intereſted therein! What joy does the early convert often taſte, eſpecially toward the cloſe of his days, when he approaches *the mark* [y] of his long deſire and hope; when he conſiders that as he has been long labouring

[u] Mat. 5. 19.
[v] Luke 17. 10.
[w] Mat. 16. 27.
[x] Job 11. 16.
[y] Phil. 3. 13, 14.

to increase in the knowledge of God, he shall suddenly *see him as he is*; and that as he has been long endeavouring after a conformity to him, he shall not only see him, but *be like him* too [z]: that as all the powers of his soul have been dedicated to his service, so they shall be in a little time intirely fill'd with his glory, and incessantly employ'd in his praise; and as the members of his body have been *fellow-servants* [a] of righteousness with the faculties of his soul, so their refin'd matter and elegant form [b] at the resurrection shall render them fit to become their partners in glory.

Thus have we made it evident, that the time of our youth is in many respects the best and fittest for the great work of remembring our maker, and of engaging in his service; and this, even upon the supposition of our being sure of obtaining an opportunity of repenting in old age, tho we should not reform before.

But we have farther to shew, that as the time of youth is the best, so it may be, and is most likely to be the only season wherein it will be possible for us to devote ourselves to our creator, or wherein our service will be acceptable to him: which gives us the clearest proof of all, of the danger and folly of neglecting to consecrate to him the morning of our days. But the consideration of this we shall refer to another discourse.

[z] 1 John 3. 2.
[a] Rom. 6. 13.
[b] 1 Cor. 15. 42, 43, 44.

The reaſonableneſs and advantages of an early converſion to God demonſtrated.

SERMON III.

ECCLES. xii. 1.

Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them.

TO the diſadvantages of delaying converſion till the evil days of old age, and the advantages of devoting one's ſelf to the ſervice of God in youth, on which we have already inſiſted, we have this one farther conſideration to add, *viz.* That

4. Our eternal intereſt is extremely hazarded by deferring converſion to old age, and beſt ſecur'd by an early change. For,

(1.) We are always uncertain of future time for the accompliſhment of this important work. Our time is at the diſpoſal of our maker, and he has not entruſted our laviſh hands with the whole ſtock of this precious treaſure, but only ſuffers it to run thro' them by moments; ſo that we can recal no paſt, nor can we command any future time: 'tis therefore our buſineſs to improve the preſent, being ignorant how long the divine bounty will continue our time in this world. Upon this account the wiſe man inſtructs us well, not to *boaſt* ourſelves *of to morrow*, ſeeing *we know not what a day may bring forth* [c]: and the prophet Iſaiah reprehends the folly of thoſe that incourage one another to go on in ſinful exceſſes, by profanely promiſing themſelves, that *to morrow* ſhould *be as the preſent day, and much more abundant* [d]. The apoſtle James alſo ſhews the vanity of ſuch fooliſh preſumptions: *Go to now*, ſays he, *ye that ſay, to day, or to morrow, we will go into ſuch a city, and continue there a year, and buy and ſell, and get gain; whereas you know not what ſhall be on the morrow: for what is your life? it is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth away: for that ye ought to ſay, if the Lord will, we ſhall live, and do this or that* [e].

And experience, as well as ſcripture, aſſures us, that *every man walks in a vain ſhew* [f];

[c] Prov. 27. 1.
[d] Iſa. 56. 12.
[e] James 4. 13, 14, 15.
[f] Pſal. 39. 6.

and

and that *man*, in this reſpect, *even at his beſt eſtate is altogether vanity* [g]: that ſome *die in their full ſtrength, being wholly at eaſe and quiet; their breaſts being full of milk, and their bones moiſten'd with marrow:* as others *die in the bitterneſs of their ſouls, and never eat with pleaſure*: that *they lie down alike in the duſt, and the worms cover them* [h]. 'Tis evident to every one's obſervation that youth does not exempt us from death, nor inſure us to any farther portion of time than what we at preſent enjoy: but on the contrary, that the far greater number of mankind go early to the grave; and for one that reaches to old age, a multitude fall ſhort of it.

Nor is it an uncommon thing for perſons of the moſt vigorous and hardy conſtitution of body to be ſuddenly ſnatch'd away into the other world by ſome violent diſeaſe, or otherwiſe: for we are obnoxious to ſo many fatal ſtrokes, and ſo frail is the texture of our earthly tabernacles, that ſome of the leaſt and moſt contemptible things in the world are capable of giving them a mortal ſhock; and the very *pores* of the skin ſometimes prove *breaches* wide enough for *the king of terrors* to enter [i].

This is well enough known, and often enough thought on by the generality of men, to engage them to uſe precautions to ſecure themſelves or their poſterity, as much as they

[g] Ver. 5.
[h] Job 21. 23, 24, 25.
[i] Job 18. 14.

can, from the prejudice their temporal affairs might otherwiſe receive from ſudden death. And the rate at which an eſtate for life is uſually valued, ſufficiently ſhews, that to ſuch purpoſes as theſe men need not be *taught to know their end*, and the *meaſure* of their *days* what it is, that they *may know how frail* they are [k].

And if there be no compariſon between earth and heaven, between the uncertain wealth of this world and the durable riches of the other, between this life and that which is to come; then 'tis infinitely more imprudent for a man to neglect but for a moment, *to make his calling and election ſure* [l], whatever future time here his youth and ſtrength may ſeem to promiſe, than for him careleſly to ſuffer the ſecurity of his temporal eſtate to depend merely on the uncertain life of another man, when he need not put it to that hazard; or to expoſe his poſterity to poverty and miſery, by omitting to make due proviſion for them againſt his own mortality, when he has a fair opportunity of doing it.

'Tis folly and madneſs to leave that undone to day, which muſt be done at one time or other, or elſe we are ruin'd for ever, and which may, for ought we know, be impoſſible to be perform'd to morrow; to neglect to improve the preſent time in doing that on which our eternal bliſs depends, when the precious opportunity of doing it may the

[k] Pſal. 39. 4. [l] 2 Pet. 1. 10.

next

next moment by ſudden death or ſome ſtupifying diſeaſe become irreparable.

Even the impious atheiſt, and the profane epicure *make* ſpeedy *proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfil the luſts thereof* [m], from the conſideration of the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of their time in this world; and ſeek to gratify and indulge their ſenſes to day, becauſe they are not ſure of doing it to morrow. *Let us eat and drink*, ſay they, *for to morrow we ſhall die* [n]: and they have ſo far reaſon on their ſide, in that they act in conformity to their principles, becauſe their hope is only in this life, and they profeſs not to expect another. How unaccountably ſtupid then are they, who tho they believe there is a future ſtate after this life, and tho they *know that they ſhall die* [o], and that they know not how ſoon, yet in their vain imaginations *put the evil day of death afar off* [p], and defer from time to time the great work of *laying up treaſure in heaven* [q], till the ſeaſon of doing it is irretrievably loſt! And in vain is ſo precious a talent as time *put into the hands of ſuch fools, who have no heart to improve it* [r].

If the wiſe man argues rightly when he excites to diligence even in the ordinary affairs of this life, becauſe of the ſpeedy approach of death, this reaſon infinitely multiplies its force when apply'd to our preſent

[m] Rom. 13. 14.
[n] Iſa. 22. 13. 1 Cor. 15. 32.
[o] Eccl. 9. 5.
[p] Amos 6. 3. Ezek. 12. 27.
[q] Mat. 19. 21.
[r] Prov. 17. 16.

purpoſe,

purpoſe, and may therefore moſt fitly be uſed to ſtir us up to an early and diligent improvement of the time of youth in the ſervice of God: *Whatſoever thy hand findeth to do*, ſays he, *do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom in the grave, whither thou goeſt* [r].—*For man alſo knoweth not his time: as the fiſhes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the ſnare; ſo are the ſons of men ſnared in an evil time, when it falleth ſuddenly upon them* [s]. 'Tis therefore our prudence and intereſt *to work while it is day*, ſeeing we know not how ſoon *the night* may *come upon* us, *wherein no man can work* [t]. But farther,

(2.) If our time were in our own hands, as it is in the hand of God [v], ſo that we could extend it many years beyond the ordinary courſe of life; or if we had the certain *fore-knowledge* [w] of the limits which the Almighty has fix'd to our days; if we knew *the number of our months* [x], and any of us could read ourſelves antient in the book of the divine decrees, this could by no means juſtify or excuſe our negligence, if we ſhould thereupon preſume to delay our converſion till towards the cloſe of our time, becauſe of the uncertainty of the continuance of the day of God's patience and grace. For as the days of our lives are uncertain, ſo is the day of grace

[r] Eccl. 9. 10.
[s] Ver. 12.
[t] John 9. 4.
[v] Pſal. 31. 15.
[w] Job 7. 1.
[x] Job 14. 5.

too;

too; and as thoſe are very ſhort, ſo this may be much ſhorter, and we may ſoon out-live *the time of our viſitation* [y] from heaven, and ſo *the things that belong to our peace*, may be finally *hidden from our eyes* [z].

It is infinite mercy in the great and holy God to give a wretched ſinner one ſmile, one ſingle offer of reconciliation; and 'tis great ingratitude and folly in a guilty creature but once to refuſe to hearken to ſo gracious a call. But what words can expreſs the goodneſs and condeſcenſion of the Almighty to a miſerable worm, when he importunately repeats the terms of peace to invite, nay to *beſeech* him *to be reconciled to him* [a]! And how provoking muſt the guilt of that ſinner be, who, after all this kindneſs of God toward him, ſtops his ears at his counſel, like *the deaf adder that will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never ſo wiſely* [b]! And therefore it is not to be wondred at, if his abuſed patience and mercy be turn'd into indignation and wrath. And thus it often comes to paſs, *becauſe* men *receive not the love of the truth, that they might be ſaved*; *God ſends them ſtrong deluſion, that they ſhould believe a lye, and that they all may be damned, who believe not the truth, but have pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs* [c]. And the word of God, inſtead of being *the ſavour of life unto life*, be-

[y] Luke 19. 44.
[z] Ver. 42.
[a] 2 Cor. 5. 20.
[b] Pſal. 58. 4, 5.
[c] 2 Theſſ. 2. 10, 11, 12.

comes

comes *the savour of death unto death* to them [d]. Thus the righteous God *sets his face against* them that *stiffen their necks against* him [e], and *hardens their hearts* in judgment, who *themselves* have *harden'd them* against the offers of mercy [f]. If the declining church of Ephesus was threaten'd with the removal of her *candlestick* [g], in case she refus'd to hearken to the voice of our Saviour, when he call'd her to repentance; how justly may every impenitent sinner fear the speedy ending of the day of grace to him? And if at one sermon of the apostle Paul's, as some of the Jews his auditors were converted, so others of them were judicially sealed up in *hardness of heart*, and *blindness of mind* [h], the most dreadful punishment on this side hell; and the gospel, which they had rejected and despised, was suddenly snatch'd from them to be carried to the ignorant heathen; is it not still to be fear'd, that they who defer to yield themselves *to the obedience of faith* [i], when the glad tidings of salvation have been again and again published to them, may utterly *fall short* of happiness by this their obstinacy and *unbelief* [k]? And if *profane Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birth-right, was afterwards rejected, when he would have inherited the blessing, and found no place of repen-*

[d] 2 Cor. 2. 16.
[e] Jer. 44. 10, 11. 2 Chron. 30. 8. Nehem. 9. 16.
[f] Rom. 9. 18. Exod. 8. 15. Acts 19. 9.
[g] Rev. 2. 4, 5.
[h] Acts 28. 23——28.
[i] Rom. 1. 5.
[k] Heb. 3. 19.

tance,

tance, tho he ſought it carefully with tears [l]; how juſtly may God reject them, who have often *reſiſted the ſpirit of grace* [m]? and ſuffer them *to mourn at laſt* [n] without pity in their greateſt diſtreſs, who have often *griev'd* the *holy ſpirit* [o] in gratifying their ſinful inclinations? And ſeeing he has ſaid his *ſpirit ſhall not always ſtrive with men* [p], who knows how ſoon he may *ſhut up his tender mercies in diſpleaſure* [q] againſt thoſe that have long rebell'd againſt him; and *ſwear in his wrath that they* ſhall *never enter into his reſt* [r]? how ſoon he may accompliſh that terrible threatning he has pronounc'd againſt the impenitent, *He that hardens his neck, being often reprov'd, ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroy'd, and that without remedy* [s]?

(3.) There is not only a poſſibility or a bare likelihood of the expiration of the day of grace, to thoſe that ſpend the beſt of their time in rebellion againſt their maker, before they arrive at old age; but on the contrary, there is only a poſſibility and no likelihood, that the holy Spirit ſhould continue to ſtrive with them at the winding up of their days, who thro' the greateſt part of their time have reſiſted his counſels and motions. And 'tis not only reaſon that furniſhes us with proofs of this from the ſovereignty and juſtice of

[l] Heb. 12. 16, 17.
[m] Acts 7. 51.
[n] Prov. 5. 11.
[o] Eph. 4. 30.
[p] Gen. 6. 3.
[q] Pſal. 77. 9.
[r] Pſal. 95. 11. Heb. 3. 18.
[s] Prov. 29. 1.

God,

God, conſider'd with the great aggravations of impenitence under the means of grace, or the threatnings in the holy ſcripture that plainly include this danger, as appears from the laſt head inſiſted on; but experience confirms this, and evinces that what our Saviour ſays of rich men, may with as much reaſon and force be applied to old ſinners, namely, that *it is eaſier for a camel to paſs thro' the eye of a needle, than* for ſuch *to enter into the kingdom of heaven* [s]. And if this ſaying ſeem ſevere to any in reſpect of theſe laſt, as it did to the diſciples of Chriſt in regard of the other [t], it cannot juſtly be ſoftned with any farther addition than that which our Saviour ſubjoin'd, to qualify his words in the firſt caſe, *viz.* that *nothing is impoſſible with God* [u]. It is a thing poſſible, becauſe all things are ſo to God, but very unlikely, and not to be often expected; and when at any time it comes to paſs, God may be ſaid to make a ſtep out of the ordinary method of the diſpenſation of his grace, ſomewhat like that he makes, when he works a miracle in the ſphere of nature. In this matter, I ſay, one may ſafely appeal to experience. Let any one that is acquainted with a conſiderable number of pious and aged perſons, ask each of them from what time he dates his converſion; and for one that has had that happy change wrought on his ſoul ſince he became old, he

[s] Mat. 19. 24.
[t] Ver. 25.
[u] Ver. 26.

ſhall

ſhall find many that turn'd to God in the ſtrength and verdure of their youth.

And can there be a greater inſtance given then of the *deceitfulneſs of ſin* [x], and of the bewitching power it has over the common ſenſe and reaſon of mankind, than we have in the vain promiſes of repentance in old age, with which ſo many flatter themſelves, and by which they ſeem to hope to render God propitious to them? Is any kind of folly ſo great in its degree, or ſo dangerous in its conſequences as this; for mortals to lull themſelves aſleep in ſin, and ſing a ſtupifying *requiem* to their ſouls, while they hang on the brink of eternal perdition, when their vain hope has merely this uncertain foundation, that there is a bare poſſibility, that their old age may be accepted of God, tho they ſpend their youth in ſinning againſt him! What an unparallel'd preſumption, for a man to neglect to make proviſion for his everlaſting bliſs at preſent, only becauſe it is not abſolutely impoſſible that he may do it in time to come! To refuſe the preſent improvement of the time of grace God is now pleas'd to allow him, becauſe the divine goodneſs can afford him the like advantage hereafter; tho it is very improbable that he will grant it to ſo preſumptuous a criminal! Will any man fall without fear upon the point of his ſword, becauſe 'tis poſſible he may not receive a mortal wound by it? Is any man ſo mad as to

[x] Heb. 3. 13.

poison himself with the most subtle venom, because he thinks there is some possibility of his obtaining an antidote? Or will any one in his wits carefully suffer his body to languish under a violent disease, without seeking for cure till his strength is almost quite exhausted, and he's ready to expire, thinking himself secure enough of recovery, because it is not utterly impossible, that a man may be restor'd to health when almost reduc'd to the last gasp by violent sickness? No— men are more careful of their bodies than to hazard them at this rate, how careless soever they are of their souls: they are prudent in the affairs of this life, but act after the most absurd and improvident manner about the great concerns of the world to come.

But whether we will act reasonably or not, what has been argued does abundantly demonstrate that it is both highly reasonable and advantageous for young persons to devote themselves to the service of their *creator in the days of their youth*; and that it is as dangerous as it is unreasonable to defer that important work to the days of old age, which are very uncertain, in that we know not whether we shall attain them or not; and, if we do, will prove so evil, if this great business of our lives be till then neglected, that we shall have occasion to complain that we *have no pleasure in them.*

I shall now endeavour to improve the things I have insisted on, by way of application:

And

And ſhall addreſs myſelf,

1. To thoſe who are advanc'd in years.

2. To thoſe who have not yet exceeded the days of youth.

Firſt, As for you who are advanc'd in years:

What has been ſaid muſt needs offer you an occaſion to inquire of your own conſciences, whether you have dedicated yourſelves to the ſervice of God or not; whether you have yet *remembred your creator* in the ſenſe of our text, and are truly converted to him.

1. If you have not ſo remembred him, conſider,

(1.) How extremely dangerous your caſe is. Can you be ſecure on the very brink of deſtruction? ſurely it is more than *high time* for you *to awake* [y], *leſt you ſleep the ſleep of death* [z]. It will be a miracle of grace, if ever you be *recover'd out of the ſnare of the devil, who have been* ſo long *led captive by him at his will* [a]. It has been your great folly to defer to *lay up in ſtore for yourſelves a good foundation againſt the time to come* [b], till now; but your folly in deferring it longer will ſtill increaſe together with your guilt and danger: of which if you are ſenſible, ſeek immediately to eſcape; *fly from the wrath to come* [c], which is haſtening toward you; for tho you may careleſly ſlumber, *your damnation ſlum-*

[y] Rom. 13. 11.
[z] Pſal. 13. 3.
[a] 2 Tim. 2. 26.
[b] 1 Tim. 6. 19.
[c] Mat. 3. 7.

bers not [d], but will soon overtake you, if you do not speedily *awake to righteousness* [e], and to the serious remembrance of your creator; for *the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God* [f]. If any of you have vainly flatter'd yourselves all your days with the presumptuous thoughts of having still time enough before you for the great work of your conversion; let me warn and exhort every such person, in the words of the apostle Peter to Simon Magus, *Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee: for I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity* [g]. And *to day, while it is called to day*, remember your maker, *lest any of you be* farther *harden'd thro' the deceitfulness of sin* [h].

(2.) If you are convinced of the folly and sinfulness of your neglect, do not absolutely conclude, 'tis now too late to obtain mercy, nor continue that neglect by despair, in which you have long persisted by presumption. As you cannot set limits to the justice of God, so neither can you measure his long-suffering and goodness: therefore you ought not now to say, *his mercies are quite gone for ever, and he will be favourable no more* [i]. Encourage yourselves to turn to God, and to rely on his mercy, at least with the same ar-

[d] 2 Pet. 2. 3
[e] 1 Cor. 15. 34.
[f] Psal. 9. 17.
[g] Acts 8. 22, 23.
[h] Heb. 3. 13.
[i] Psal. 77. 7, 8, 9.

gument the famiſh'd lepers us'd to engage one another to throw themſelves on the compaſſion of the Syrian army: *Why ſit we here*, ſay they, *until we die? If we ſay we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we ſhall die there: and if we ſit ſtill here, we die alſo. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the hoſt of the Syrians; if they ſave us alive, we ſhall live, and if they kill us, we ſhall but die* [k]. Reaſon with yourſelves after the like manner. Why ſit we ſtill in a ſtate of the greateſt danger? If after the ſenſe of our danger, we return to our former courſe of life, we muſt periſh; if we remain in our preſent poſture, and neglect to try the *father of mercies*, whether he will commiſerate ſuch inveterate ſinners, we inevitably periſh too. Let us caſt ourſelves at his feet; if he will ſave us, we ſhall live eternally; if he refuſe, we can but periſh. Say as David did, in another caſe, *it may be the Lord will look on our affliction* [l]. Venture to proſtrate yourſelves at the throne of grace, as queen Eſther did at the feet of the Perſian monarch, with an *if I periſh, I periſh* [m]; and who knows, but the ſcepter of divine mercy may yet tender you a pardon? It is poſſible that the prodigal may be accepted, tho he return late to his father's houſe [n]; and that God may place you among the rare inſtances of his free and ſovereign grace. And if you are deeply ſen-

[k] 2 Kings 7. 3, 4.
[l] 2 Sam. 16. 12.
[m] Eſther. 4. 16.
[n] Luke 15. 20.

ſible of your paſt iniquity, and earneſtly groan for a change in your ſouls, for a *new* and pure *heart* and *a right ſpirit* [o], it is to be hop'd, that God, whoſe compaſſions are infinite, has now at laſt open'd your eyes, that you might not *ſleep the ſleep of* eternal *death* [p]; has made you *hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs* [q], with a deſign to ſatisfy you; and has wounded your ſpirits by a *godly ſorrow* [r], with a purpoſe to heal them with *the oil of joy* [s], with the *comforts of his free ſpirit* [s]. You have run a ſtrange riſque to delay a work of this nature, and of this conſequence, till now; but if God has given you deep and ſerious repentance, he deſigns you favour, and your contrition gives hope of a pardon. *Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon* [t]. But,

2. If you are truly converted, it is your happineſs and honour: *The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteouſneſs* [u].

But did you conſecrate to your creator the flower of your youth? or have you only offer'd him your later years?

[o] Pſal. 51. 10.
[p] Pſal. 13. 3.
[q] Mat. 5. 6.
[r] 2 Cor. 7. 10.
[s] Iſa. 61. 3.
[s] Pſal. 51. 12.
[t] Iſa. 55. 7.
[u] Prov. 16. 31.

It

It may be you began to *work in his vineyard* but *at the tenth* or *eleventh hour* [v], or at leaſt ſince your ſun has been declining. If ſo, then

(1.) Admire and adore that grace of God, which kept back your feet from deſtruction, when you were ready to ſtep into eternal miſery; and indulgently pluck'd you out of the way of approaching ruin, as the bleſſed angels did Lot, to ſecure him from the impending ſhower of fire and brimſtone, which threatned Sodom, when *he lingred* in that vicious and accurſed city [w]. How can you chuſe but reflect with aſtoniſhment on the danger you have eſcap'd, and bleſs that divine hand which kindly diverted you from that preſumptuous courſe, that was ready to caſt you on a rock, on which you have ſeen ſo many daſh themſelves in pieces? Praiſe him, I ſay, *who has ſav'd you from ſo great*, and ſo near *a death* [x]; and *remembred* you in mercy, when you had *forgotten him days without number* [y].

(2.) Let the ſincerity of your thankfulneſs, and of your repentance too appear, by the improvement of that little portion of time which you have yet remaining. *Redeem your time*, now at leaſt, *becauſe the days are evil* [z]. Improve the evil days of old age with the utmoſt diligence, ſince the better days of

[v] Mat. 20. 5, 6.
[w] Gen. 19. 16, 17.
[x] 2 Cor. 1. 10.
[y] Jer. 2. 32.
[z] Eph. 5. 16.

youth are past recalling. Make it evident to all, that your late repentance is true, by such an industrious management of your remaining days, as may convince the world that it is no small grief of heart to you, that your repentance was so late. Recover your lost time as much as possible by your present diligence, and let none of your precious moments for the future be heedlessly expended, but husband them well in *working out your salvation with fear and trembling* [a]. Let your frequent hours, and acts of devotion, make up the long want yourselves have had of those sacred privileges that attend the exercises of holy worship; and thereby make restitution, as much as in you lies, to your creator, for the sacrilege you have often committed, in robbing him of those pious offerings, those continual sacrifices with which you ought daily to have furnished his altar. Let your example be as beneficial to mankind as it has been injurious: and as you have tempted others to sin, strive now to incite them to piety. If you bear the character of parents or masters, labour to convince those young persons, who are under the influence of your counsel, or the awe of your authority, of the great advantages of an early conversion: and let them know you now seriously lament the past follies of your youth; that as your ill counsels, and vicious patterns have long made you *partakers of other mens sins* [b], so

[a] Phil. 2. 12. | [b] 1 Tim. 5. 22.

your

your religious exhortations and good examples may obtain on your acquaintance, and thoſe that are under your conduct, ſo as to intitle you, in ſome ſort, to other mens virtues. In a word, remember that you are under a ſpecial obligation, *that*, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, *you ſhould no longer live the reſt of your time in the fleſh to the luſts of men, but to the will of God. For the time paſt of your life may ſuffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when ye walked in laſciviouſneſs, luſts, exceſs of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries* [c].

If your caſe be otherwiſe, and you began early to give yourſelves up to the ſervice of your creator:

(1.) Bleſs and magnify that God who was *the guide of your youth* [d], who wrought that happy change on your ſouls, who were *children of wrath by nature as well as others* [e]. What copious ſubjects of praiſe will your experience furniſh you withal, when you reflect on the long ſeries of divine favours, that have attended you thro' the various parts and changes of life! And what a pleaſant review may you take of a well-ſpent life, directed to the glory of God, and conducted by his grace! What matter of thankſgiving may you find in the many aſſurances of his love, and in the evidence of the work of his grace upon your ſouls; and in the frequent and

[c] 1 Pet. 4. 2, 3.
[d] Jer. 3. 4.
[e] Eph. 2. 3.

familiar proſpect he has given your faith of that inviſible and ineffable glory after which you have been ſo long aſpiring, and which you are now ſo near enjoying! You have reaſon to bleſs your creator, as well for preventing your commiſſion of the many ſins you have eſcaped, as for forgiving thoſe you have committed; for preſerving your innocence on many occaſions, as well as for pardoning your guilt on others; for making you happy ſo ſoon by an early converſion, and for giving you the hope of a diſtinguiſhing crown of glory; for honouring the beſt of your time by accepting it in his ſervice; and for ſweetning the worſt of it, the evil days of old age, with all the comforts which the reflection on a life of grace, and with all the joys which the proſpect of a life of glory can inſpire. Surely *the high praiſes of God* ſhould be *in your mouths* [f]; for, to uſe the words of Chriſt on that ſolemn occaſion, when his diſciples cry'd Hoſanna to him, and the children join'd their tender voices in that grateful acclamation, *I tell you if* you *ſhould hold your peace, the ſtones would immediately cry out* [g].

(2.) You ought to manifeſt the truth of your early converſion by the extent of your knowledge in divine things, and by the warmth of your affection to them. *I write unto you, fathers,* ſays the apoſtle John, *becauſe you have known him that is from the be-*

[f] Pſal. 149. 6. [g] Luke 19. 40. Mat. 21. 15.

ginning.

ginning [h]. Both God and men expect that your growth both in knowledge and in grace, ſhould bear ſome proportion to the time you have ſpent in the ſchool of Chriſt; that you ſhould be the talleſt cedars in Lebanon, that have been ſo long planted there; and the moſt fruitful vines, that have been ſo often *watered with the river of God* [i]. Seeing you are not babes, either in regard of the time you have lived in the world, or of that you have ſpent in the church of God, but perſons *of full age, who by reaſon of uſe* ought to *have your ſenſes exerciſed to diſcern both good and evil* [k]; let it not be ſaid of you, that *when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the firſt principles of the oracles of God* [l], and that you are again become ſuch as *have need of milk, and not of ſtrong meat:* or that you are of the number of thoſe who are *ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth* [m]. You ought to be greatly mortified to this world, who have a long time profeſſed to be convinced of its vanity, and to be *dying daily to it* [n]; and who find old age ready to tranſport you to the other. And ſince you have long pretended to have had your *converſation* [o] and buſineſs in heaven, certainly you ought to have gain'd much by that

[h] 1 John 2. 13, 14.
[i] Pſal. 65. 9.
[k] Heb. 5. 13, 14.
[l] Ver. 12.
[m] 2 Tim. 3. 7.
[n] 1 Cor. 15. 31.
[o] πολίτευμα. Phil. 3. 20.

happy

happy commerce; and to have laid up much treaſure in the regions of glory, as well as to have been *rich in good works* [p] here below: and you ſhould be dextrous in putting on and handling the *chriſtian armour* [q], who have often had occaſion to try it; and ſo skilful in defeating the projects of your adverſary the devil, ſince you are ſuppos'd *not* to be *ignorant of his devices* [r], as after the ſharpeſt conflicts to become *more than conquerors thro' him that hath loved* you [s].

Theſe things may reaſonably be ſuppoſed and expected from you. But do you fill up theſe characters, that ſo well agree with your long ſtanding in the church of God? Are you fathers in knowledge and piety as well as in years? and is the ſize of your ſpiritual ſtature proportionate to the time of your natural life, or at leaſt of your ſpiritual life, which commenced not long after the other? Are you become very humble by a long acquaintance with your own hearts, and with that God who is *the ſearcher* [s] of them? Is your faith become ſtrong by a long exerciſe? your hope firm by your long and familiar acquaintance with the promiſes of God, and with him *in whom all thoſe promiſes are yea, and amen* [t], true and faithful? Have your various afflictions taught you to *poſſeſs your ſouls in patience* [u]? and have the many fa-

[p] 1 Tim. 6. 18.
[q] Eph. 6. 11——18.
[r] 2 Cor. 2. 11.
[s] Rom. 8. 37.
[s] Jer. 17. 10.
[t] 2 Cor. 1. 20.
[u] Luke 21. 19.

vours

vours you have received of God ſo tun'd your hearts to his praiſe, that you can *in every thing give thanks* [v]? Does your ſpiritual vigour advance, as your natural ſtrength declines? and is your *inward man renewed day by day, as your outward man periſhes* [w]? Have you made ſuch a proficience as this in religion? or is it otherwiſe? Examine yourſelves ſtrictly and ſeriouſly about it. May not your creator ſend you back to learn of thoſe that are much younger, and who have not had ſo great advantages of improvement as you? Nay, may he not ſend you back to be inſtructed by yourſelves, I mean, by the former part of your lives? and ſhame your late backſlidings, by putting you in mind of your early zeal? May he not juſtly reprove you in reminding you of your former kindneſſes to him, as well as of his to you, as he did the Jews of old; and ſay, *I remember thee, the kindneſs of thy youth, and the love of thy eſpouſals, when thou wenteſt after me in the wilderneſs, in a land that was not ſown: Iſrael was holineſs to the Lord, and the firſt-fruits of his increaſe* [x]? May he not charge you as he did the Epheſians, with having *left your firſt love*, and with having fallen ſhort of *your firſt works* [y]?

Surely it becomes you now ſtrenuouſly to perſiſt in *fighting the good fight of faith* [z],

[v] 1 Theſſ. 5. 18.
[w] 2 Cor. 4. 16.
[x] Jer. 2. 2, 3.
[y] Rev. 2. 4, 5.
[z] 1 Tim. 6. 12.

when

when you are near the conſummation of all your victories in an eternal triumph: to *preſs forward* vigorouſly in your ſpiritual race now at laſt, when you have almoſt attained *the mark* [a]; and to aſpire earneſtly after that diadem of glory, with which you are ſo ſuddenly to be crown'd: to converſe conſtantly in heaven, now you are juſt forſaking the earth; to live intirely by faith, ſince you are going to die in it [b]; to *die in the Lord* [c], and that in order to *live with him* [d] in a ſtate that will turn your faith into viſion, and your hope into enjoyment.

If thus while age bends your bodies towards the earth, grace raiſes your ſouls toward heaven; if your faith grows ſagacious, while your eyes grow dim; and your hope grows firm, while your hands and knees are feeble; if the warmth of your love to God increaſes as your natural heat abates, and the ſallies of your affections after him grow ſtrong and lively, as the motions of your animal ſpirits grow weak and languid; then as your *laſt works* will be *more than your firſt* [e], ſo you will honour God as well in the worſt part of your time [f], as you have done in the beſt of it. And as by *bringing forth much fruit* even *in old age* [g], you will *glorify your heavenly*

[a] Phil. 3. 13, 14.
[b] Heb. 11. 13.
[c] Rev. 14. 13.
[d] 1 Cor. 13. 12.
[e] Rev. 2. 5.
[f] —*Primis ſic major gratia pomis;*
Hybernæ pretium ſic meruere roſæ.
[g] Pſal. 92. 14.

father;

father [h]; so your hoary hairs will be honourable in this world, and an *exceeding and eternal weight of glory* [i] will be your portion in the world to come.

Secondly, Let me now address myself to you that are young; and intreat you also to put this important question to your own hearts, Whether you have yet remembred your creator, so as to dedicate yourselves to his service, or not?

If you have devoted to him the first-fruits of your time,

(1.) It behoves you with profound humility and reverence to ascribe to your maker the glory of his grace, who made you *willing in the day of his power to serve him in the beauties of holiness*, even *from the womb of the morning* of your time [k], and to offer him the early *dew of your youth*: for *no flesh may glory in his presence* [l]; seeing *all flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof as the* fading *flower of the field* [m], in a moral as well as a natural sense. If you have been distinguished from others by early impressions of piety, know that it is grace *that hat hmade the difference* [n]; and glorify that God, who *perfects his praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings* [o]; and *reveals that to children*, which he sometimes *hides from the wise and prudent* [p]. Bless him

[h] John 15. 8.
[i] 2 Cor. 4. 17.
[k] Psal. 110. 3.
[l] 1 Cor. 1. 20.
[m] Isa. 40. 6. 1 Pet. 1. 24.
[n] 1 Cor. 4. 7.
[o] Psal. 8. 2. Mat. 21. 16.
[p] Luke 10. 21.

that

that has *redeemed you from the earth, and from among men* [q], at a time when the pleaſures of ſin, and the ſociety of ſinners appear in the moſt alluring form. Praiſe that God, who by the early ſeeds of holineſs which he has ſown in your hearts, is preparing you to reap a plentiful harveſt of graces and bleſſings here, and a glorious reward hereafter.

(2.) Conſider the mighty obligations that are upon you to engage you in a holy converſation. As you have received more than many others, more is required of you: and what we have ſaid may be juſtly expected to be found in thoſe old diſciples that have followed Chriſt from their youth, ſufficiently ſignifies the mark at which you are to aim, and the exalted degrees of grace to which you are to aſpire. In order to which you ought to be cautious of the leaſt degree of apoſtacy. Have a care, leſt after having ſeem'd to *begin in the ſpirit, you* ſhould miſerably *end in the fleſh* [r]. Therefore *flee youthful luſts* [s]; and *endure hardſhip as good ſoldiers of Jeſus Chriſt* [s]. Inure yourſelves to ſelf-denial, and *ſet your affections on things above* [t]. *Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation* [u]; or at leaſt that your *faith* may *not fail you* [v], when you are tempted: and to that end read and *meditate on the word of God, day and night* [w],

[q] Rev. 14. 3, 4.
[r] Gal. 3. 3.
[s] 2 Tim. 2. 22.
[s] Ver. 3.
[t] Col. 3. 1, 2.
[u] Mat. 26. 41.
[v] Luke 22. 32.
[w] Pſal. 1. 2.

that

that you may know how to manage *the ſword of the ſpirit* [x], ſo as to wound the head of your potent and ſubtle adverſary. *I write unto you young men*, ſaith the apoſtle John, *becauſe you are ſtrong, and the word of God abideth in you, and you have overcome the wicked one* [y]. Govern yourſelves in every thing by the exact rule of the holy ſcripture; for *wherewith ſhall a young man cleanſe his way, but by taking heed to it according to* that divine *word* [z]? Take heed leſt the holy religion you profeſs be diſhonoured by your practice. Let your manner of life be ſo circumſpect and irreproachable, that it may ſtop the mouths of blaſphemers; ſtop them, did I ſay? nay, that it may open them in favour of religion, that *when they ſee your good works, they may* be induced to *glorify your heavenly father* [a], and to worſhip him, and to confeſs that *God is in you of a truth* [b]. Let a becoming modeſty and gravity adorn your converſation: *Let your ſpeech be always with grace, ſeaſoned with ſalt. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouths, but that which is good to the uſe of edifying, that it may miniſter grace to the hearers* [c]. Provoke others to a holy emulation by the luſtre of your examples, and chuſe the excellent patterns of the moſt devout and experienced chriſtians for your own imitation. Let your

[x] Eph. 6. 17.
[y] 1 John 2. 13, 14.
[z] Pſal. 119. 9.
[a] Mat. 5. 16.
[b] 1 Cor. 14. 25.
[c] Col. 4. 6. Eph. 4. 29.

zeal

zeal be constantly directed by knowledge, and your knowledge always ballasted by humility. In a word, *set the Lord always before your faces* [d], that you may not sin against him. Remember your creator, what he is, and what homage and service you owe him. Remember how reasonable that service is [e], and how intirely your true interest and happiness is involv'd in it; and industriously improve all the advantages of your time to the glory of him, who is *the God of your life* [f]; that if you live to be aged, you may be able to make happy reflections on your youth, and on the endearing favours of him that has been with you from your youth to old age, and *has carried* you, as the prophet speaks, even *to hoary hairs* [g]: that *coming to the grave in a full age*, you may be *like shocks of corn that come in in their season* [h], fully ripened and prepared for heaven; or if you are called to lie down in the grave before, that you may be ripe for glory, and *made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light* betimes [i]; that your names may be great on earth, and your rewards may be great in heaven.

As for you who are still young, but have not yet made an offering of your youth to your creator:

(1.) Let me ask you, what hinders you from presenting so reasonable a service to

[d] Psal. 16. 8.
[e] Rom. 12. 1.
[f] Psal. 42. 8.
[g] Isa. 46. 4.
[h] Job 5. 26.
[i] Col. 1. 12.

him?

him? You have ſeen that the reaſon of this duty, which our text urges, is founded in your very being, in the relation you bear to the Almighty as his creatures: and ſince your greateſt intereſt too is embarked in it, why ſhould ſo juſt, and ſo uſeful an exhortation be rejected? Will you yet continue to rob your maker of the homage and ſervice you owe him? and deprive yourſelves of the honour and privilege of ſerving him? Will you yet be *unmindful of the rock that begat you*, and ſtill *forget the God that form'd you* [k]? Is the great God ready to accept your ſervice, and will you ſtill refuſe to offer it? What illuſions of ſenſe are thoſe that charm you? what *bonds of iniquity* [l] are thoſe that captivate your ſouls, and hold you, both againſt the forcible arguments, and the indulgent invitations of the divine word?

As we have taken a view of the arguments that oblige you to your duty; let us alſo, to remove the chief ſtumbling-blocks that obſtruct your way, inquire a little into the pretended reaſons that detain you in your ſin.

Will you ſay, "It is a rigorous demand to "require us to forſake the world almoſt as "ſoon as we come into it; and to renounce "the charming ſweets wherewith it flatters "our ſenſes, even before we have ſo much as "taſted many of the pleaſures to which it "invites us: and this in that part of our "life, that gives us the higheſt reliſh of theſe

[k] Deut. 32. 18. [l] Acts 8. 23.

" delights; when our ſenſes are moſt lively " and active, and when the world ſhews it- " ſelf moſt obliging and kind, and preſents " us on every ſide with thouſands of pleaſant " objects?"

But tell me, are the promiſes of the world like the promiſes of God? Are thoſe pleaſures, the higheſt reliſh of which vaniſhes, by your own confeſſion, together with your youth, and ſo may be ſoon out-liv'd by yourſelves, to be compared with the eternal joys of heaven? Are the ſmiles of the world, and the pleaſures of ſenſe, to be preferred to the ſmiles of God and the joy of a good conſcience here, and to the refin'd and ſpiritual delights of the other world? Is a life of ſin, which will prove *bitterneſs in the latter end of it* [m], which is enjoy'd but a few moments, but followed with the gnawings of *a worm that never dies* [n], to be choſen before a life of holineſs, which is accompanied with inward peace in the ſoul, and followed with immortal glory and pleaſure? Is it worth the while to purchaſe a few hours delight in gratifying your ſordid and brutiſh appetites, with the loſs of your precious ſouls? Will you rather hazard an eternal privation of the joys of heaven, and expoſe yourſelves to the danger of everlaſting perdition, than curb the extravagant inclinations of your vain and ſenſual hearts? Will you ſtill flatter the levity and unſteddineſs of your youthful minds, in pur-

[m] 2 Sam. 2. 26. | [n] Mark 9. 44.

ſuing all the vain fantoms your extravagant imaginations can repreſent? Will you continue to follow thoſe gay bubbles, which will yield you ſcarce any thing but diſappointment, vexation and guilt; when you are invited to fix your minds and your hearts on your creator, to make him the object of your thoughts and of your deſires, who gives his votaries the hope of immortal glory, which produces in their ſouls a great degree of happineſs at preſent, and who will hereafter fill them with joys infinitely beyond the moſt raiſed expectation?

Will you farther urge, "But we have no "mind to be ſingular, to diſtinguiſh our- "ſelves from the generality of mankind, by "an affectation of a ſtrict courſe of life; and "that at an age when every one allows the "ſenſes an indulgence? There is a proper "ſeaſon for every thing. Youth is the time "for pleaſure, and old age for repentance; "for the latter part of our lives ſeems de- "ſtin'd to trouble and ſorrow: and then it is "fit to live a ſpiritual life, when age has "deaden'd the ſenſes, and ſo prepar'd us to "live after that abſtracted manner."

And is it not as eaſy as it is reaſonable to reply, That it is a fooliſh ſcrupuloſity to be ſo careful to avoid ſingularity, as to run from it into a common deſtruction: to refuſe to be holy and happy, and to chuſe ſin and miſery, becauſe *the way to life is narrow* and unfrequented, and the way to *damnation*

broad[o] and full of company? Is not this a vain affectation of conformity to the world, for you to *follow a multitude to do evil*[p], tho *their ways lead to hell, and go down to the chambers of death*[q]; to abandon yourſelves to the torrent of evil examples, tho they *drown you in perdition*[r]; to ſacrifice your own eternal intereſt in complaiſance to the cuſtom and humour of other men, and to *walk in the counſel of the ungodly*[s], tho you damn yourſelves for company?

And becauſe ſome rather ſeem to pity, or even indulge, than blame many of the follies of youth, partly from the conſideration of their unexperience and giddineſs of mind, and of their great propenſity to carnal pleaſures; partly becauſe cuſtom has rendred the vices of youth familiar to the world, and partly becauſe many of thoſe that are advanced in years, inſtead of reflecting on their youthful vanities with ſorrow, are yet ſo inſenſible, as to look back upon them as excuſable follies, or as ſins of ſmall conſequence; muſt therefore an opinion that has ſo rotten a foundation, obtain credit in the world, as if it were a maxim of undoubted truth? Does the holy ſcripture, or reaſon allow youth any ſuch diſpenſation for ſin? Is ſo great an evil to be at any time indulg'd? Is any ſcope in vice allowable to the time of youth any more

[o] Mat. 7. 13, 14.
[p] Exod. 23. 2.
[q] Prov. 7. 27.
[r] 1 Tim. 6. 9.
[s] Pſal. 1. 1. and ver. 6.

than

than to the time of old age? Is not ſin always evil, and always to be avoided? Can you think it deſerves the very beſt of your time, and that your creator is unworthy of ſuch an offering?

You have heard it ſufficiently proved that youth is the moſt proper time of all, and old age the moſt unfit for the great buſineſs of converſion to God; that it is the greateſt proof of the reality of our ſelf-denial, when we reſtrain the vicious inclinations of our youth, that are ſo eager after ſenſual pleaſures: and that an aged ſinner is ſo far from being likely to be a true penitent, that the long time he has been hardening himſelf in his wickedneſs, renders the change of his heart impoſſible, without a more than ordinary effort of grace, which God is ſeldom pleas'd to grant to them that are grown old in vice.

Will you ſay after this, "God whoſe mercies are infinite, is gracious enough to receive us into his vineyard at the laſt hour of the day, and to give us a place in paradiſe, if, like the thief on the croſs, we begin to repent, when we are ceaſing to live; and we may hope to die happily, tho we have lived viciouſly?"

After having ſo largely detected the vanity of ſuch hopes as theſe, as we have already done, much more need not be added. Is not this to build an imaginary happineſs on a thouſand uncertainties? And what a daring

preſumption is it, to *continue in ſin, that grace may abound* [s]? Becauſe the gracious God has given one example in his word, of a ſinner converted at the laſt hour of his life, is it reaſonable for every ſinner to conclude, that he may expect the ſame extraordinary favour, and ſo may ſafely defer his repentance till he is ready to expire? No; this great inſtance of mercy in the crucified malefactor, was given to prevent a true, tho late penitent, from deſpairing; not to encourage any bold ſinner to *turn the grace of God into laſciviouſneſs* [t] by his preſumption. And how many fatal inſtances might be given of the vanity of ſuch hopes as theſe! How few of thoſe daring ſinners have arrived at the time, which they pretended to devote to religious purpoſes! How very few of thoſe who have reached old age, have become ſenſible of their guilt and danger after a long life ſpent in the ſervice of ſin! Have they not generally ſupinely dozed away their laſt moments, as they vainly ſpent their firſt, without awaking, till they have found themſelves in *everlaſting burnings* [v]? Or if they have received ſome convictions of their guilt, theſe have not always produced on them the characters of *a repentance to ſalvation* [u], but have ſometimes filled their miſerable ſouls with deſpair and horror; and their former deluſive hopes of obtaining pardon at the laſt

[s] Rom. 6. 1.
[t] Jude 4.
[v] Iſa. 33. 14.
[u] 2 Cor. 7. 10.

hour,

hour, have only iſſued in *a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation to devour* them [w]. Learn therefore, before it be too late, ſo *to number* your *days as to apply* your *hearts to wiſdom* [x].

Will you, after all that has been ſaid, ſtill perſuade yourſelves, that it is yet time enough for you to remember your creator; and that you may ſafely enough defer the ſecuring of your ſalvation yet ſome time longer, if not quite to the evil days of old age; that it is beſt for you firſt to eſtabliſh yourſelves in the world as firmly as you can, and to make proviſion for your temporal intereſt; and afterwards at your leiſure to think on the affairs of another life?

Theſe things have been alſo ſufficiently anſwered before; yet let me farther add, That as your time is very uncertain on the one hand, ſo your reſolutions are yet more fickle on the other: for how common a thing is it for men to aſſume a purpoſe of repentance, and preſently to relinquiſh it again! How often do they violate their promiſes to God and to themſelves, while they are perpetually fixing a new future ſeaſon of amendment! So *deceitful is the heart of man, and ſo deſperately wicked, who can know it* [y]?

And how prepoſterous is the courſe you take, to endeavour to provide for your bodies before your ſouls, and to ſecure your

[w] Heb. 10. 27.
[x] Pſal. 92. 12.
[y] Jer. 17. 9.

temporal before your eternal intereſt: hearkning rather to the deluding ſuggeſtions of *the father of lyes* [z], who tempts you with the gilded vanities of this periſhing world, than to the counſel of him who is *wiſdom* itſelf [a], who adviſes you to *ſeek firſt the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs*; and aſſures you, that then *the things* of this world, *i. e.* ſo far as may conduce to your welfare, *ſhall be ſuperadded* [b]?

Since therefore your creator requires your preſent time, 'tis your prudence, your intereſt, and your duty, without *conferring with fleſh and blood, immediately to obey* him [c]; to *ſeek him while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near* [d], and while he calls upon you; leſt if you perſiſt to ſlight and forget your maker, and his counſel any longer, he ſhould ſo *remember your iniquity and viſit your ſins* [e], as to pronounce on you this dreadful ſentence: *Becauſe I have called and ye refuſed, I have ſtretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have ſet at nought all my counſel, and would none of my reproof: I alſo will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as deſolation, and your deſtruction cometh as a whirlwind; when diſtreſs and anguiſh cometh upon you. Then ſhall they call upon me, but I will not anſwer; they ſhall ſeek me*

[z] John 8. 44.
[a] 1 Cor. 1. 24.
[b] Mat. 6. 31, 32, 33.
[c] Gal. 1. 16.
[d] Iſa. 55. 6. Pſal. 32. 6. Pſal. 145. 18.
[e] Hoſ. 8. 13, 14.

early,

early, but they ſhall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not chuſe the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counſel, they deſpiſed all my reproof: therefore ſhall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be fill'd with their own devices: for the turning away of the ſimple ſhall ſlay them, and the proſperity of fools ſhall deſtroy them [f]. How will you bear ſuch a diſmal ſentence as this? O with what terror will it ſtrike your guilty ſouls, eſpecially when you are under the apprehenſion of approaching death, or bowed down under the burden of age! *What will* you *do in thoſe days of evil, when the iniquity of your heels ſhall compaſs* you *about* [g]? *when* your *bones will be full of the ſin of* your *youth, which ſhall lie down with* you *in the duſt* [h]? when the terrors of God ſhall ſtrike your conſciences, and all your paſt life ſhall accuſe and condemn you? when *the heavens ſhall reveal* your *iniquity, and the earth ſhall riſe up againſt* you [i]? *when* your *fleſh upon you ſhall have pain, and* your *ſouls within you ſhall mourn* [k]? *Tho wickedneſs be* now *ſweet in your mouths, and* you therefore *hide it under your tongues; tho* you *ſpare it, and forſake it not, but keep it ſtill within* your *mouths*; yet its luſcious *taſte ſhall be turn'd into bitterneſs in* your *bowels, and into the gall of aſps within you* [l]. Is it not better to repent early

[f] Prov. 1. 24—32.
[g] Pſal. 45. 5.
[h] Job 20. 11.
[i] Job 20. 27.
[k] Job 14. 22.
[l] Job 20. 12, 13, 14.

than

than to be reduced to mourn in deſpair, when it is too late? when the Almighty ſhuts out your prayers, and when *a fire is kindled in his anger, that will burn to the loweſt hell* [m]; *when he that made* you *will not have mercy on* you, *and he that form'd* you *will ſhew you no favour* [n]? If once that dreadful day overtakes you, each of you will then lament his folly with the ſaddeſt accents of ſorrow and anguiſh, and turn upon himſelf with indignation and fury, ſaying, *How have I hated inſtruction, and my heart deſpiſed reproof! and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to them that inſtructed me* [o]! and bewail himſelf, as our bleſſed Lord did Jeruſalem, when he wept over that unhappy city, crying, *O that* I *had known, even* I, *in* that *my day, the things that belonged unto* my *peace, but now they are hid from* my *eyes* [p].

Now conſider this, ye that forget God, leſt he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver [q].

If you begin now to entertain ſerious thoughts of religion, to ſtir you up farther to this great, tho miſerably neglected duty, of *remembring your creator in the days of your youth*, let me intreat you to conſider two or three things.

1. That God has been often pleaſed to dignify them with ſpecial marks of honour

[m] Deut. 32. 22.
[n] Iſa. 27. 11.
[o] Prov. 5. 12, 13.
[p] Luke 19. 42.
[q] Pſal. 50. 22.

in

in his church, who have honour'd him by the early dedication of their youth to his ſervice; and has render'd their ſervices as eminent in the world, as their piety has been early and exemplary.

As the forward piety of Joſeph kept him uncorrupt in his tender years amidſt the evil examples of his envious *brethren* [r]; ſo he was bleſſed with the largeſt ſhare in the affection of his aged father. And tho his zeal for their reformation rendred him the object of their hatred, as well as of his father's love; yet the divine providence wonderfully proſper'd him, and gave him favour in that ſtrange country, whither their unnatural malice had exil'd him [f]. And as he there preſerved his chaſtity when it was try'd [s] after ſo extraordinary a manner, that it was become impoſſible for him to keep himſelf innocent without incurring the odium of being reputed guilty, as well as enduring other ſevere puniſhments; ſo the purity of his untainted ſoul, who rather choſe to be accounted vile than to be ſo, was afterwards ſtrangely clear'd up by the wiſe and gracious providence of the Almighty; and his injur'd name celebrated with the higheſt honours of the court of Egypt [t]: the juſt and holy God whom he ſerv'd, having endow'd him with a prophetick gift of interpreting dreams; and by that divine skill open'd a way for his

[r] Gen. 37. 2, 3, 4.
[f] Gen. 39. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.
[s] Ver. 7—20.
[t] Gen. 41.

advance-

advancement from priſon to ride in the ſecond chariot of the kingdom. So that he became a prince and a father to that nation whither he was brought a ſtranger and a ſlave; and proved the happy inſtrument not only of preſerving multitudes of people from the rage of a tedious famine of ſeven years continuance, but alſo of nouriſhing his father's family in that time of common calamity [t]. And by this means he had the honour of the moſt obſequious addreſſes of thoſe very brethren of his who had been his perſecutors, and at laſt had the God-like pleaſure of melting them into a deep conviction of the unreaſonableneſs of their enmity againſt him, by the moſt endearing careſſes [u], and ſweeteſt expreſſions of brotherly love and tenderneſs, and the ſatisfaction of that truly generous and innocent kind of revenge, of *overcoming evil with good* [v]. Thus God was pleaſed to reward the eminent piety of his youth, by making him the darling of his providence; and to lay the foundation of his glory in thoſe ſufferings which were the proof of his virtue.

Samuel, a young votary to the ſervice of God in his tabernacle, as he grew up, became the favourite both *of God and men* [w]: ſo eminently was he anointed with the ſpirit of prophecy, and that in a time when *the word of the Lord was very pre-*

[t] Gen. 43. and chap. 44.
[u] Chap. 45.
[v] Rom. 12. 21.
[w] 1 Sam. 2. 26.

cious,

cious [x], that *all Iſrael, from Dan even to Beerſheba, knew that he was eſtabliſhed a prophet of the Lord* [y].

That piety which ſeaſon'd the tender years of David, rendred him, according to his name, ſo *beloved* [z] both of God and men, that God was pleaſed to fill him with a prophetick ſpirit; and both God and men thought good to chuſe him to wear a regal diadem. The ſupreme ruler and arbiter of the world was pleaſed to reward his forward zeal for him, by raiſing him from the fold to the throne, and by making him exchange his ſhepherd's crook for a royal ſcepter: ſo that from a feeder of ſheep he became both the prophet and king of a mighty nation; *the ſweeteſt pſalmiſt*, and the moſt valiant prince of Iſrael [a].

Religious Joſiah, who began to reform himſelf in the ſixteenth year of his age, and to reform the people under his government before he had exceeded twenty [b], was honoured of God with the happy accompliſhment of a glorious reformation in the kingdom of Judah, when but twenty ſix years old [c]; and had the earlineſs of his piety ſignaliz'd by the delay of thoſe judgments with which Jeruſalem was threaten'd, till the expiration of his religious reign [d]. God was

[x] 1 Sam. 3. 1.
[y] 1 Sam. 3. 19, 20.
[z] דויד à דוד *dilectus*. 1 Sam. 17. 33, 42, 56.
[a] 2 Sam. 23. 1.
[b] 2 Chron. 34. 3.
[c] Ver. 8.
[d] Ver. 23—28.

pleaſed

pleaſed to honour his early zeal with a peculiar protection given for a time to the nation under his conduct, for his ſake; and would not fill his reign, that was ſo famous for his piety, with thoſe ſcenes of horror and miſery, which darkned the times of his unhappy ſucceſſors. The divine compaſſion would not ſuffer him to ſee that city ſtain'd with the blood of its inhabitants, which he had been ſo induſtrious to purge from ſuperſtition, and from the worſhip of idols. And as his life was honourable to himſelf, and of the greateſt advantage to his ſubjects; ſo his death was attended with their ſolemn and univerſal mourning [e], an honour which was refuſed to his profane ſucceſſor: his funeral was celebrated with the lamentations of a great prophet; and his memory preſerved freſh and eternally fragrant in the ſacred annals of the kings of Judah.

As John the baptiſt firſt devoted his youth to the pious meditations of a retir'd life, and then to the publick ſervice of God in his generation [f]; ſo he was inveſted with the honourable title of meſſenger to the Meſſiah, to prepare the way before him; who ſays, he was not only *a prophet*, but *much more than a prophet*; and that *among thoſe that had been born of women, there was no greater prophet* than he [g].

[e] 2 Chron. 35. 24, *&c.*
[f] Luke 1. 80. and 3. 2, 3, 4.
[g] Luke 7. 26, 27, 28.

The

The early piety of Timothy, who was well acquainted with the holy ſcriptures from his childhood [h], was honoured with the moſt endearing love of the great apoſtle of the Gentiles, and with an eminent ſtation in the church of God, wherein his prudent and religious deportment ſecured his youth from contempt [i]: and made the apoſtle give him a ſingular character to the Philippians, aſſuring them that he had *no man like-minded, who* would *naturally care for* their *ſtate* [k].

The *beloved diſciple* [l] is reported to have been very young, when proſelyted to the doctrine of Chriſt; and perhaps this was not the leaſt occaſion of his being made the boſom-friend of his divine maſter.

Nay, moſt of thoſe who were dignified with the ſacred office of apoſtleſhip, ſeem to have been converted in the flower of their time, by ſeveral circumſtances of their hiſtory in the goſpel, and by the many years ſome of them ſpent in travels, and other hard ſervices and ſufferings, after the aſcenſion of our Saviour.

On the contrary, we find not like inſtances of perſons call'd to ſuch eminent ſervices for God, and receiving ſuch diſtinguiſhing marks of honour from him in old age, after a flagitious life, almoſt quite waſted in the ſordid drudgery of ſin.

[h] 2 Tim. 3. 15.
[i] 1 Tim. 4. 12.
[k] Phil. 2. 20.
[l] John 13. 23.

What

What a generous emulation then ſhould theſe illuſtrious examples, we have mentioned, kindle in the breaſts of you who are young! With what a holy ambition ſhould they inſpire you, to become the early candidates of religion! Who knows in what eminent ſervices it may pleaſe your maker to employ you? Who knows what ſignal favours and tokens of his divine love he may confer on you, if you conſecrate to him the firſt of your ſtrength, and the beſt of your time?

But the example, which of all others ſhines with the greateſt glory, and communicates the ſweeteſt influence, which is moſt capable both of raiſing your wonder, and of exciting your imitation, is that of our bleſſed redeemer, who came into the world to teach us by his life, as well as to ſave us by his death: he was pleaſed to honour the youthful ſtate of life by paſſing thro' it, *in the days of his fleſh* [m], while he dwelt with men, and did not defer his father's work to old age, a ſtage of life on which he never vouchſafed to enter: in his very childhood *he waxed ſtrong in ſpirit, was filled with wiſdom, and the grace of God was upon him* [n]. His ſoul advanced in divine knowledge, as his body did in ſtature, and ſo he *grew in favour with God and man* [o]. At twelve years of age he was found reaſoning with the

[m] Heb. 5. 7.
[n] Luke 2. 40.
[o] Ver. 52.

Jewiſh

Jewiſh doctors in the temple [p], with that ſenſe and underſtanding that amazed all the auditors, and with that zeal that became him, who made it his delight to be *about his father's buſineſs* [q]. All the time he lived among men may be properly enough called the time of youth; for there's reaſon to conclude from his hiſtory in the goſpel, that he accompliſhed the whole of his work before he was advanced much beyond thirty years. And what a glorious example does his ſhort life preſent us? a life without ſpot or blemiſh, without the leaſt ſign of any inclination to ſin, without the leaſt ſhew of injuſtice or want of charity towards men, or the leaſt appearance of diſobedience or indevotion towards God: nay, a life ſpent in the greateſt acts of charity to mankind, and in the higheſt elevations of piety to his father. A life that conſumed itſelf in the *zeal of his houſe* [r]; that expired in a ſacrifice to the glory of God, and for the ſalvation of the ſouls of men.

So that you have not only the precept, but the preſcription too of your creator to engage you in your duty. He by whom you were made, by whom you are preſerv'd, by whom alone you can be reſtor'd from a ſtate of ſin, and by whom you muſt be finally judg'd, was pleaſed to aſſume human nature, to be made man *in all things* [t], ſin only excepted,

[p] Ver. 42, 46, 47.
[q] Ver. 49.
[r] John 2. 17.
[t] Heb. 2. 17.

on purpoſe to exemplify the duty in our text by his life, as well as to conquer ſin and hell by his death. And ſince he calls you to *learn of him* [s], to bear the yoke to which he meekly condeſcended to bow his own ſacred neck in his tender years, ſurely *it is good* for you to ſtoop to that *yoke in your youth* too [t]. Ought you not to apply yourſelves as well to his example for the direction of your lives, as to his ſufferings for the remiſſion of your ſins? And is it not both for your honour and intereſt to be conformable to that bleſſed life, that was firſt taken up to inſtruct you, and then laid down to redeem you?

2. Conſider how ſmall that oblation is, which is required of your hands, when your whole life is claim'd as the right of your creator; ſeeing it is but a part of it, that can be directly and immediately offered to him. The ſecular affairs in which the neceſſities of your bodies engage you, and ſleep, together with the other reparations of nature that are requiſite to make thoſe frail tabernacles tenantable, divide between them ſo great a ſhare of the time of life, that it is but a little portion of it that can be allotted to pious exerciſes, how ſoon ſoever you apply yourſelves to the practice of them: and will you grudge your maker this ſmall ſhare of your time, for the whole of which you intirely depend on him? Can you think much to allow a part of every day to devotion, to

[s] Mat. 11. 28, 29, 30. | [t] Lam. 3. 27.

the

the immediate ſervice of God, and for the welfare of your ſouls, when he allows you ſo large a part of your time to provide for the preſent eaſe and welfare of your bodies, in procuring them the conveniences of life? Is it not more reaſonable to grudge that theſe houſes of clay ſhould have ſo much of your care and time, and that your ſouls, nay, and your creator, ſhould have ſo little of either? And ought you not rather to ſtudy how to improve even that time which you ſpend in ſupporting and accommodating this animal life, ſo as to render it ſubſervient to the great ends of honouring your maker, and of ſaving your ſouls, than to contrive excuſes for intirely ſquandering away the beſt part of that little time in vanity and ſin, which you ought to devote to the holy exerciſes of piety and religion?

And, once again: Can you think you ſhall bring an acceptable ſacrifice, if after the conſumption of the prime of your days in vanity, you ſhould come to offer only ſome of your laſt hours to your creator? Will the days, in which you will confeſs you have no pleaſure yourſelves, be a proper offering for him to take pleaſure in? Is it fit to reſerve only the blind and lame and ſick for ſacred ſervices? May not ſuch a return be reaſonably expected to every ſuch oblation, as God by the prophet Malachi makes to the profane Jews in another caſe;

Offer it now to thy governor, will he be pleaſed with thee, or accept thy perſon? ſaith the Lord of hoſts [u]. Would you not have reaſon to fear that ſuch nauſeous ſervices would be caſt back as *dung upon your faces* [v]? and that you would have an anſwer ſomewhat like that, which you may imagine a ſubject would receive, who after having waſted his youth and ſtrength in bearing arms againſt his ſovereign, ſhould come on crutches in his old age to tender himſelf to be liſted under his banner? Such a kind of anſwer, I ſay, as ſuch an inveterate rebel might expect; but as much more terrible, as it is a greater crime to ſin againſt the great creator than to offend a creature, and as the reſentments of the living God are more dreadful than the anger of a mortal man.

3. To conclude: Conſider whether the largeſt portion of that little time, which you can poſſibly ſpend in the ſervice of God here, makes any figure, when compared with an eternity to be employed in the pleaſant contemplation and enjoyment of him hereafter. Can you think much to dedicate the few moments God is pleaſed to lend you in this world to him, who will reward the ſervice of thoſe moments with everlaſting bliſs in the next, among thoſe bleſſed ones, whoſe happineſs as well as buſineſs it is to be perpetually devoted to the ſervice of their maker; who enjoy immortal youth, and feel

[u] Mal. 1. 8. | [v] Mal. 2. 3.

an unconceivable pleaſure in employing it wholly in the contemplation of his perfections, in the celebration of his praiſes, in the intire performance of his will, and in the perfect enjoyment of his favour?

Can it be thought that any of thoſe bleſſed ſpirits that are poſſeſſed of this glory, can think much that they ſpent a little time here below to obtain it? May it not rather be ſuppoſed that they all unanimouſly wiſh, if ſuch a wiſh be conſiſtent with that perfect ſtate of bliſs, that they had improved every minute of that little time which their creator allotted them in this world, to his glory? It is not to be doubted, that the holy angels and ſaints in heaven do inceſſantly worſhip and ſerve their maker with the greateſt alacrity imaginable, becauſe they conſtantly behold his face, and are always enamoured of his glory; they are under a continual impreſſion of the reaſonableneſs and goodneſs of his will, and know perfectly well that their own excellency and happineſs conſiſts in their exact conformity to it; and accordingly they find unexpreſſible delights in doing his pleaſure. And if they count not an eternity too much for the ſervice of their creator, can you think the ſhort time of your ſojourning here below, too large an offering for him?

Seeing then the law of your creation, and the dictates of reaſon; the importunity of the divine word, and the warnings of the

holy Spirit; the command of your maker, and the example of your redeemer; the experience of the ſaints on earth, and the unanimous ſenſe of the ſaints and angels too in heaven; together with your own higheſt intereſt both in time and eternity, all conſpire to oblige you to devote the firſt and beſt of your time to the great author of your being; how can you any longer refuſe to give up your youth to be tied by theſe many ſacred bonds, as a ſacrifice to the horns of his altar [x]?

Behold now is the accepted time; *behold now is the day of ſalvation* [y]. Therefore *to day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts* [z].

[x] Pſal. 118. 27.
[y] 2 Cor. 6. 2.
[z] Pſal. 95. 7, 8. Heb. 3. 7, 8.

The groans of a ſaint, under the burden of a mortal body.

A ſermon preached at the funeral of Mr. *John Belcher*, late miniſter of the goſpel. *April* 1, 1695.

SERMON IV.

2 Cor. V. 4.

For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be ſwallowed up of life.

THE wiſeſt of men tells us, that *the end of a thing is better than the beginning of it* [a], and that *the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth* [b]. To whatever other ſenſe theſe ſayings may be accommodated, they are eminently true of a righteous

[a] Eccl. 7. 8. [b] Eccl. 7. 1.

man. What a vaſt difference is there between the ſtate in which he comes into the world, and that wherein he paſſes out of it! and how much better is his exit than his entrance on the ſtage of this tranſitory life! he is *born in ſin* [c], but *dies in faith* [d]: he comes into the world a *child of wrath* [e], goes out of it *an heir of bliſs* [f]. When he begins to live, he begins to *go aſtray from* God [g]; when he comes to die, he makes the laſt and *largeſt ſtep towards* him [h]: when he draws his firſt breath, he is *without God in the world* [i]; when he breathes his laſt, it is to *be ever with the Lord* [k]. He enters the world naked, defiled, and helpleſs [l], in a moral as well as in a natural ſenſe; he paſſes out of it clothed with the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, beautified with the graces of the holy Spirit, *ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might* [m]: and all this in order to be inveſted with eternal glory.

It is true, there is uſually ſome joy on earth *when a man is born into the world* [n], notwithſtanding all thoſe deplorable circumſtances that accompany his birth: but how much greater joy may we reaſonably ſuppoſe there is in heaven, when a ſaint is removed from

[c] Pſal. 51. 5.
[d] Heb. 11. 13.
[e] Eph. 2. 3.
[f] Rom. 8. 17.
[g] Pſal. 58. 3.
[h] 2 Cor. 5. 8.
[i] Eph. 2. 12.
[k] 1 Theſſ. 4. 17.
[l] Ezek. 16. 4, 5.
[m] Eph. 6. 10.
[n] John 16. 21.

this

this lower world, seeing so many glorious advantages attend his death!

And it is no wonder then if holy men do often look without any amazing fears, nay sometimes with earnest desires of their change, into the dark region of death, while with the piercing eye of faith they can discover the glorious mount of God beyond the shadows of that gloomy vale. It is no surprising thing, if, when, with our apostle, they compare their past and present with their future state, what they have been, and what they are, while here, with what they shall be hereafter, they mix their sighs and wishes with his, and with one common voice express their sense after the same manner; *We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened*, &c.

The apostle had in the former chapter declared with how much faithfulness and diligence both himself, and his companions in the ministration of the gospel, had laboured in that blessed work, tho they had many hardships to encounter in the discharge of their duty, which yet they were enabled to endure with great firmness of mind, by the hope they had of an happy resurrection with other saints, resembling that of their Lord and master: *Knowing*, says he, *that he who raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also by Jesus, and shall present us with you* [o].

[o] Ver. 14.

That

That which farther tended to mitigate their ſufferings, was the fervent love they bare to the church on whoſe account they ſuffered, as is plainly enough ſuggeſted in the following words, *for all things are for your ſakes* [p] : but principally the ardent zeal they had for the honour of the name of God, which they knew would be highly advanced in the world by the praiſes of thoſe who obſerved with admiration, and with joy partook of the abounding grace that was communicated by their doctrine, and exemplified in their ſufferings. Therefore he mentions it as their common deſire and hope, that this might be the iſſue of their labours and ſufferings, in the ſame verſe, *That the abundant grace might thro' the thankſgiving of many redound to the glory of God* [q]. *For which cauſe we faint not* [r].

After which he oppoſes their preſent tribulations, to both their preſent and future enjoyments; and compares the afflictions they endured with the ſupplies of grace they had received, and with the ſtate of glory they expected. He ſhews how they weighed viſible and ſenſible againſt inviſible and ſpiritual things, and temporal things againſt eternal; the former of which proved very light, and the latter exceeding weighty, while the ſteddy hand of faith held the ballance. Which prudent compariſon he mentions as a main

[p] Ver. 15.
[q] Ibid.
[r] Ver. 16.

ſupport

ſupport and occaſion of comfort to them under the greateſt of their trials: for when he had to the former reaſon of their comfort ſubjoin'd theſe words, *for which cauſe we faint not*, he immediately adds, *But tho our outward man periſh, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: while we look not at the things which are ſeen, but at the things which are not ſeen; for the things which are ſeen are temporal, but the things which are not ſeen are eternal* [f].

The beginning of the fifth chapter expreſſes the firmneſs of their belief and hope for this bleſſed ſtate, and the eagerneſs of their deſires after it, tho not to be obtained without the previous diſſolution of their bodies.

The ſtrength of their faith is expreſſed, *ver.* 1. *For we know that if our earthly houſe of this tabernacle were diſſolved, we have a building of God, an houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* The earneſtneſs of their deſires, in *ver.* 2. *For in this we groan earneſtly, deſiring to be clothed upon with our houſe which is from heaven.*

And *ver.* 3. he adds, *If ſo be that being clothed, we ſhall not be found naked.* Which ſome interpret as a caution, intimating the neceſſity of their being clothed with the righteouſneſs and grace of Chriſt [s], as the condi-

[f] Ver. 16, 17, 18.

[s] See Mat. 22. 11. and Rev. 16. 15.

tion

tion of, and preparation to their being clothed with his glory: and that the apoſtle by this expreſſion intimates the reaſon why he had in the foregoing verſe ſpoken of the ſaints being *clothed upon*, namely, that he ſpeaks there of glory as an upper garment, becauſe none ſhall obtain it but they that are firſt found clothed with grace.

Others refer theſe words to the *clothing of glory*, ſpoken of before: and ſome interpret them as an ardent wiſh, which the words in the original will bear, *And O that we being clothed, may not be found naked*[t]. As the words of Chriſt when he wept over Jeruſalem, may be interpreted, *If thou hadſt known*, q. d. *O that thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace*[u], &c.

In the words of our text, the apoſtle repeats and explains what he had ſaid before concerning their ſtate in this life, and that which they hop'd for in the life to come: *For we that are in this tabernacle do groan*, &c.

And tho theſe words are here eminently and directly applied to the miniſters of the goſpel, yet they very well may, and ought to be extended to all true chriſtians in general, who, when in a ſerious and conſiderate frame of mind, and under the influence of the lively exerciſe of faith, have the ſame ſentiments, and ſpeak the ſame language.

[t] Εἴ γε καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι. | [u] Εἰ ἔγνως, Luke 19. 42.

We

We have herein,

I. The deſcription of the body of a ſaint, while in this life; it is called *a tabernacle.*

II. The uneaſy ſituation of the ſouls of believers while they dwell in theſe bodies, they are *burdened. We that are in this tabernacle——being burdened.*

III. Their deſire of changing their preſent ſtate for a better, explained, (1.) Negatively, not by being *unclothed*; *not for that we would be unclothed.* (2.) Poſitively, by being *clothed upon, that mortality might be ſwallowed up of life.*

IV. Both their great ſenſe of the weight of their burden, and their fervent longing after this better ſtate, expreſſed by *groaning*; *we—groan.*

I. The firſt thing we are to inquire into, is the deſcription of the body of a chriſtian, why it is called a tabernacle.

A tabernacle or tent, is a kind of dwelling ſuited to a ſtate of pilgrimage or warfare; and as this is the common uſe of tabernacles, ſo it is to be remembred that one was made by the direction of God, and devoted to his ſacred ſervice, when he led his antient people thro' the wilderneſs. And ſince the metaphor in our text may be explained as well by a common, as by the ſacred tabernacle; we may conſider its reference to each of them, whereby

whereby the fitneſs of thus deſcribing the body of a ſaint, to whom the ſcripture often gives the characters of a pilgrim, and of a ſoldier, will eaſily appear.

The body of a ſaint in this life may be compared to a tent;

(1.) For its frailty and weakneſs. A tent is a kind of dwelling indeed, but a very ſlender one; it is rather a ſlight garment than a ſtrong building; and is ſo far from being able to defend its inhabitant from the hoſtile aſſaults of a potent enemy, that it often fails of ſecuring him from the leſs violent attacks of incommodious weather. And thus it is with our bodies, they can no more guard our ſouls from the various miſeries of this life, than a tent can defend a man from a cannon-ſhot, or a ſcabbard preſerve a ſword from the force of lightning. Nay, the body is ſo far from being able to ſecure the ſoul from miſery, that it is often itſelf the occaſion of her pains and ſorrows, as we ſhall ſhew hereafter.

And as a tent is but an ill defence to him that poſſeſſes it, ſo it is a very feeble thing in itſelf, and may be eaſily and ſuddenly pulled down; and may in this reſpect well denote the weakly and changeable ſtate of our bodies in this life, which are ſoon diſorder'd by diſeaſes, and ſoon overthrown by death. As cloth, which is the matter of a tent, is not proof againſt the attacks of a feeble moth, but becomes a prey to that little inſect; ſo ſome little and unheeded circumſtance often ſtrangely

strangely distempers a human body, which, to use the words of Eliphaz, *is even crush'd before the moth* [v], or, as Job says, *consumes as a rotten thing, as a garment that is moth-eaten* [w]. And what the prophet Isaiah speaks of some, is in this sense applicable to all men; *The moth eats them up like a garment, and the worm eats them like wool* [x].

And indeed tabernacles are erected but for a little space of time; they are not built for ages to come, as superb palaces and well-fortified castles are, but fix'd for a present exigency, with the design of a speedy removal. Thus the mortal bodies wherein men dwell are of a very short continuance; they are garments soon worn out by time, if not torn asunder before old age by a violent death, or fretted in pieces by some lingering disease. *They are suddenly carried away*, as the psalmist speaks, *as with a flood; they are as sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up; in the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth* [y]. *As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more* [z]. *Our strength is soon cut off, and we flee away* [a]. Or, as Job expresses it, *Our days are swifter than a post; they flee away: they pass away*

[v] Job 4. 19.
[w] Job 13. 28.
[x] Isa. 51. 8.
[y] Psal. 90. 5, 6.
[z] Psal. 103. 15, 16.
[a] Psal. 90. 10.

as

as the ſwift ſhips, as the eagle that haſteth to the prey [b]; or in the phraſe of Hezekiah, our *age ſoon departs, and is removed from us as a ſhepherd's tent* [c].

(2.) A tabernacle is a very mean and inconvenient habitation: 'tis uſually very ſtrait, and raiſed but a little height from the earth, to which it is faſtned by cords and ſtakes, and may in this reſpect fitly repreſent our bodies, which may well be called *earthly houſes* [d] by our apoſtle; not only in regard of their matter, and of the place of their reſidence, but alſo in reſpect of the influence they have on our ſouls: becauſe they incline us to earthly-mindedneſs, and make us narrow-ſpirited; becauſe they ſo much confine us to things below, and hinder us from ſerving God with that freedom and largeneſs of heart, and ſoaring aloft to converſe with heavenly things with that eaſe and readineſs that becomes us.

The veil of our fleſh hinders our ſouls from taking a diſtinct and clear view of things that are near and obvious, and renders things remote ſcarce diſcernible; as the covering of a tent obſtructs the proſpect of him that is incloſed in it. A believer has ſome diſcerning of many great and important truths, but his knowledge of them is obſcure and indiſtinct; like the confus'd ſight of the blind man in the goſpel, who, when his eyes began to be opened, ſaw men, but could not diſtinguiſh

[b] Job 19. 25, 26.
[c] Iſa. 38. 12.
[d] Ver. 1.

them

them from trees but by their motion [e]: he ſees ſome things diſtant in futurity, but it is as *thro' a glaſs and darkly*; he really ſees and knows, but it is very imperfectly, and *but in part* [f]; tho *he knows the only true God* [g], yet he cannot *ſee him as he is* in this life [h], for *no man can* thus *ſee God and live* [i].

'Tis true, indeed, notwithſtanding the meanneſs of the accommodations of tents, yet neceſſity has often conſtrained the greateſt princes to make uſe of them; but they are by no means to be compared to thoſe magnificent manſions, where their choice leads them to reſide: for who would ſet the ſordid tents of the wild Arabs in competition with the ſumptuous palaces of kings? No more is the preſent vile and deſpicable condition of the bodies of the ſaints, to be compared to that ſtate of beauty and honour wherewith thoſe of our firſt parents were originally adorned, much leſs to that ſtate of immortal glory and perfection, with which themſelves ſhall hereafter be attired: for whereas they are now *as the tents of Kedar*, ſquallid and deform'd, they ſhall then be bright and *comely as the curtains of Solomon* [k].

But farther, as the bodies of believers are like common tabernacles, for their frailty and meanneſs by nature, ſo they may be likened to the ſacred tabernacle, which was framed

[e] Mark 8. 24.
[f] 1 Cor. 13. 12.
[g] John 17. 3.
[h] 1 John 3. 2.
[i] Exod. 33. 20.
[k] Cant. 1. 5.

by the ſpecial appointment of God, in reſpect of the uſe and ſervice they are devoted to, and of the honour they receive by grace. They are tabernacles as they are the tenements of their own ſpirits, and ſacred ones as they are the habitations of the ſpirit of God; for their bodies are conſecrated to his ſervice as well as their ſouls: the *members* of their bodies are *inſtruments* and *ſervants of righteouſneſs* [l], *veſſels* which their ſouls *poſſeſs in ſanctification and honour* [m]. Some of them are peculiarly dignified in the ſervice of God, like thoſe utenſils which were both of ſpecial uſe and ornament in the ſanctuary. The head of a ſaint, like the candleſticks of the tabernacle, holds a conſtant light of divine truth and wiſdom; while his heart, like the ſacred altar, retains a never-to-be-extinguiſhed fire of divine love and zeal: his organs of ſpeech are like the ſilver trumpets, and other muſical inſtruments of the ſanctuary devoted to the glory of God, and employed to praiſe him *in the beauty of holineſs* [n]; while the ſoul that reſides in this tabernacle, like the anointed *prieſt* [o], continually officiates before God, and devotes her nobleſt powers to him for a ſpiritual ſacrifice. Nay, the bodies of chriſtians are ſometimes called temples: *What, know you not*, ſays the apoſtle, *that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghoſt which is in you* [p]?

[l] Rom. 6. 13. and 18.
[m] 1 Theſſ. 4. 4.
[n] 1 Chron. 16. 29.
[o] 2 Chron. 20. 21.
[p] 1 Cor. 6. 19.

And

And again—*Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them* [q], &c. They are temples now in compariſon of what they formerly were before converſion, when they were *cages of every unclean and hateful bird* [r]; but tabernacles compared with what they ſhall be when modell'd *according to the pattern in the mount* [f], I mean the temple of our Lord's ſacred body [s], the preſent glory of which was formerly repreſented in his transfiguration on mount Tabor.

The ſecond thing we are to conſider, is,

II. The uneaſy ſituation of a believer's ſoul, while ſhe dwells in this earthly tabernacle, expreſs'd by her being *burdened.*

How ſlight and fickle ſoever theſe tabernacles are in reſpect of their natural frailty and mutability; yet they are heavy burdens to the ſouls that inhabit them, in regard of the troubles they expoſe them to: and tho they are honour'd in the ſervice of God in ſome degree together with their ſouls, yet in their preſent imperfect ſtate they are rather incumbrances than helps to them, and occaſion them much more affliction than comfort; inſomuch that experienc'd chriſtians, tho they find it reaſonable to rejoice, as the younger Jews did at the building of the ſecond temple, that their bodies are made ſacred taber-

[q] 2 Cor. 6. 12.
[r] Rev. 18. 2.
[f] Heb. 8. 5.
[s] John 2. 21.

nacles, and render'd fit in ſome meaſure for the ſervice of God in the ſtate of grace; yet they ſee much more cauſe to bewail their unhappineſs, when they conſider how much leſs capable they are either of ſerving or enjoying him in their preſent condition, than they ſhall be in their future ſtate of glory; as the old inhabitants of Zion could not refrain weeping, while the view of the foundation of the new temple brought to mind the greater beauty and glory of their antient one [t].

Both the word of God and experience aſſure us, that *the afflictions of the righteous are many* [u], while their ſouls ſojourn in theſe incommodious tenements: and therefore our apoſtle ſeems rather to call them tabernacles, in alluſion to thoſe of common, than to that of ſacred uſe; tho we have not thought meet to omit comparing them to the latter, as ſome alleviation to the diſcouraging weight chriſtians groan under from thoſe inconveniences and evils occaſion'd by their frail bodies, which give them a far greater reſemblance to the former. For,

1. Our bodies occaſion much of the ignorance and error of our ſouls, and much obſtruct their advances in knowledge and truth.

2. They cauſe us to ſin, and hinder our progreſs in holineſs.

3. They procure us much ſorrow and miſery, and prevent us of much comfort and joy.

[t] Ezra 3. 12, 13. [u] Pſal. 34. 19.

1. They

1. They occaſion much ignorance and error in our ſouls, and hinder our proficiency in knowledge and truth; and this many ways.

(1.) The neceſſities of our bodies lay claim to a conſiderable part of our time, and to a great ſhare of our thoughts; and thereby hinder us from meditating on ſpiritual objects with that conſtant application of mind which is requiſite for the advancement of our knowledge, and for the enlargement of our experience to any great degree. Since men were condemned to toil and labour, and *to eat their bread in the ſweat of their brows* [v], they are all more or leſs incumber'd with worldly cares; and ſpend no ſmall part of their time either in projecting and providing what they ſhall eat and drink, and what they ſhall put on; or in refreſhing their bodies with food and ſleep, and other neceſſary recreations, eſpecially when they are very weak and crazy: ſo that the opportunities of meditation but ſeldom occur, and when they do, are often abridged by many unthought of avocations. Thus while we are buſied about the conſervation of our bodies, our ſouls muſt needs want that cultivation and improvement they are capable of.

And this time were the leſs to be regretted, if we kept within the due limits aſſign'd us by the divine will, in providing for our bodies, and did not fooliſhly embaraſs ourſelves with

[v] Gen. 3. 17, 18, 19.

many fruitleſs employments and unneceſſary cares. Nature, eſpecially when inſtructed by grace, would be ſatisfied with mean things, which much leſs time would procure than what is uſually ſpent in over-delicate pampering, and in over-curious attiring theſe mortal bodies; in endeavouring to make a ſplendid appearance in the world ourſelves at preſent, and to furniſh our poſterity with means of filling up a great figure in ſucceeding times. We are ſo very prone to debaſe our ſouls to an inordinate purſuit of the pleaſures of ſenſe, the regular and moderate uſe of which was wiſely ordain'd for the preſervation of our bodies, that the moſt mortified perſons find it no eaſy task to keep a due *æquilibrium*, in providing for the neceſſities of the ſoul and body; ſo as to give the one convenient recruits, without much diſturbing the operations of the other; to entertain the body with food and raiment, and ſuch like conveniences, without tainting the ſoul with earthly-mindedneſs and ſenſuality.

Nor does the variety of worldly cares and labours only waſte our precious time, but ſtrangely diſſipate and unſettle our thoughts, and accuſtom our minds to an habit of unſteddineſs and wavering: ſo that when we would ſtrictly ſet ourſelves to ſerious meditation, the traces of thoſe many other objects we have lately converſed with, ſtart up in our fancies before we are aware, and defeat our

our purpoſes of contemplating thoſe ſpiritual things we had before us.

And we are the more apt to be thus amuſed by ſenſible things, becauſe in our preſent ſtate we are more intimately acquainted with theſe than with ſpiritual objects. And things that are within the ken of our ſenſes often make a very agreeable impreſſion on them, and thereby eaſily attract our thoughts to them; whereas thoſe that are ſpiritual and inviſible, and therefore not to be reliſhed by fleſh and blood, thoſe that do not at preſent exiſt, but muſt be ſought for in futurity, ſoon eſcape our attention and diſappear, unleſs the eye of faith be kept in a very ſteddy poſture, which is difficult to be done amidſt the various diverſions the ſenſes and fancy are continually giving us.

So that if great attention and conſtant application of mind are neceſſary to the obtaining of a great degree of true knowledge; if it be needful, as the wiſe man directs, to incline *our ears to wiſdom, and to apply our hearts to underſtanding* [w]*—to ſeek her as ſilver, and to ſearch for her as hid treaſures* [x]*: not to ſuffer her ſayings to depart from our eyes, and to keep them in the midſt of our hearts* [y]*: to hear her, watching daily at her gates, and waiting at the poſts of her doors* [z], &c. Then it is certain that our bodies in their preſent condition muſt needs be a hindrance to our know-

[w] Prov. 2. 2.
[x] Ver. 4.
[y] Prov. 4. 21.
[z] Prov. 8. 34.

ledge of *the deep things of God* [a]; ſeeing they take up ſo much of our time, and ingroſs ſo many of our thoughts.

(2.) They not only hinder our progreſs in the way of knowledge, but alſo cauſe us to wander out of it; and as they keep us in much ignorance, ſo they betray us into many errors. Senſible things, by means of our bodies, ſo eaſily ſtir up our paſſions, and ſo ſtrongly impreſs our imaginations, that our underſtandings are often clouded, and our judgments corrupted by them. The lower region of the ſoul ſends up ſo many groſs and dark ſteams into the upper, that we ſeldom attain that clearneſs and ſimplicity of mind which is requiſite to make a judgment of things, after an unbiaſs'd and uncorrupt manner: for truth is ſo commonly attended with ſelf-denial, and our carnal intereſt ſo much on the ſide of error, that when we *confer with fleſh and blood* [b], as we are too prone to do in our inquiries after truth, 'tis no wonder if we embrace its oppoſite, *putting darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs* [c].

(3.) While we are in the body, we dwell with men that have bodies made like ours, and who by means of their near alliance and intimate converſation with us, often lead us out of the way of truth, and cauſe us to adopt thoſe falſe opinions which they have fooliſhly

[a] 1 Cor. 2. 10.
[b] Gal. 1. 16.
[c] Iſa. 5. 20.

enter-

entertained, especially such of them as are made current by long prescription, and by the common vogue of mankind. For we easily receive impressions from the motions and manners of those with whom we usually converse: as *iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend* [d]. And *as in water face answers to face, so doth the heart of man to man* [e]. The very looks and gestures of our fellow-creatures engage us into a kind of sympathy with them: their words, their actions, and the very air of their countenances are so artificially managed, when they would persuade us to embrace their sentiments, that they too often strike the organs of our senses and imagination powerfully enough to inspire our minds with the same sentiments and passions which are cherished in their own. And thus the conversation even of great and wise and good men, sometimes has an evil influence upon us, because we are apt to give that deference to them, which is only owing to truth; and to treat them as if they were lords *over our faith*, rather than *helpers of our joy* [f].

(4.) Again, as by expending so much of our time, and so much of the strength of our thoughts in the pursuit of earthly things, and by abandoning ourselves to the ill conduct of our own passions, and to the groundless opinions of others; the eyes of our minds must

[d] Prov. 27. 17.
[e] Ver. 19.
[f] 2 Cor. 1. 24.

needs

needs be render'd unſteddy, dim and ſhort-ſighted, and ſo give us confus'd and ſometimes falſe repreſentations of things: ſo that folly and guilt of our own, which conſpire with thoſe other unhappy circumſtances to occaſion our wanderings, often provoke the *ſpirit* of *truth*, *in whoſe light we ſee light* [g], to withdraw his divine beams, and to leave us groping in the dark, as a juſt puniſhment for having diverted our minds from the lovely object of truth, to follow the giddy illuſions of our own fancies, or thoſe of other men; and as a proper mean to convince us, that *they that obſerve lying vanities, forſake their own mercy* [h].

'Tis then ſufficiently evident, that the mortal bodies wherein the ſouls of believers reſide, are a great occaſion of their ignorance and error, and upon this account muſt needs be burdenſom to them.

As they are alſo,

2. Becauſe they are a great occaſion of their ſins, and much obſtruct their progreſs in holineſs. And,

(1.) This is a neceſſary conſequence of what has been already inſiſted on; for ignorance and error not only render our good works very imperfect, but often make us guilty of evil ones. Our falſe notions excite irregular deſires, and theſe iſſue in criminal actions: for if the underſtanding be clouded, and the judgment perverted, the will muſt needs

[g] Pſal. 36. 9. [h] Jonah 2. 8.

needs go aſtray; if we have falſe conceptions of things in our heads, we ſhall have diſorderly motions in our hearts, and *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh* [i]; and other external actions are govern'd by the inward inclinations of the ſoul, as the hand of a watch is guided by the ſpring and wheels of the movement.

And as error occaſions ſin, ſo, on the other hand, ſin is the cauſe of error. The corruption of the heart ſends up dark miſts into the head; and when the will has taken a wrong biaſs, it perverts the judgment. We are very prone to believe thoſe notions to be true, which indulge our carnal inclinations; and are eaſily induced to judge that lawful and fit to be done, which we find ourſelves ſtrongly inclined to do: and by this means we are tempted to *call evil good, and good evil* [k]. And if *purity of heart* clarifies the mind, and diſpoſes it to *ſee* and know *God* [l], then the pollution of ſin muſt neceſſarily render it unfit for divine contemplation. Thus error and ſin, in a continual ſucceſſion, propagate and uphold one another.

(2.) Original corruption is ſo interwoven in the very conſtitution of our bodies ſince the fall, that our ſouls are no ſooner join'd to them, but they are polluted by them: we are *ſhapen in iniquity and conceived in ſin* [m], and conſequently are *eſtranged* even *from the*

[i] Mat. 12. 34.
[k] Iſa. 5. 20.
[l] Mat. 5. 8.
[m] Pſal. 51. 5.

womb,

womb, and go aſtray as ſoon as we are born, ſpeaking lyes [n]. Sin, that defil'd the ſouls of our firſt parents, did not only ſpread its malignant influence on their bodies, but extends its contagion to thoſe of their poſterity thro'-out all generations: ſo that all human bodies being tainted with the ſubtle venom at their very formation, convey the infection to the ſouls that join them, by means of the cloſe union the great Creator contracts between them. 'Tis no wonder then that a diſeaſe ſo deeply rooted is not to be intirely cured, while our bodies remain in their preſent ſtate: and tho that principle of holineſs which reigns in the hearts of believers, not only bridles, but in ſome degree ſubdues and mortifies this inveterate evil, yet while theſe houſes of clay retain their preſent form and texture, they will never be intirely purified from this fretting leproſy: this old leaven will not be utterly purged out, however grace may allay its ſourneſs; nor this root of bitterneſs be quite extirpated, however grace may crop its branches: but theſe bodies will ſtill cramp the motions of their ſouls when they aſpire heaven-ward, and too often incline them to mind earthly things; till death ſhall open them a door of liberty, and by diſlodging them from their uneaſy dwelling, deliver them from all the incumbrances under which they groan.

[n] Pſal. 58. 3.

(3.) As

(3.) As our bodies are the means of conveying thoſe vicious impreſſions that originally corrupt our ſouls; ſo they often prove the unhappy inſtruments of putting the ſinful projects of our minds in execution, and are prompt and ready to fulfil thoſe evil deſires which they have firſt excited. So that we have occaſion, even after our regeneration, to complain, with the apoſtle, of *a law in* our *members warring againſt the law of* our *minds* [o]; ſeeing the members of our bodies often become the occaſion of finiſhing ſin, as well as of beginning it. And tho the evil inclinations and purpoſes of our hearts make us ſufficiently guilty in the ſight of that God who *ſearcheth the heart and trieth the reins* [p]; yet the execution of theſe ſinful dictates of the mind by the members of the body, render us yet more criminal, both in the account of God and men: for this is to *finiſh* and *bring forth* ſin after it is *conceived* [q]; 'tis in a ſort to advance it to its height and perfection, to cheriſh the cockatrice-egg till it becomes *a fiery flying ſerpent* [r]. And the more publick the commiſſion of any ſin is, the more offenſive it is; for this is by external actions to juſtify and approve the inward impurity of the heart; 'tis to add to the viſible diſorder and confuſion of the world; to lay ſtumbling-blocks by the evil example of it in the way of the weak, and to give occaſion to

[o] Rom. 7. 23.
[p] Jer. 17. 10.
[q] James 1. 15.
[r] Iſa. 14. 29.

libertines

libertines to blaſpheme religion; 'tis openly to oppoſe and affront the Almighty: and when a man ſins after this manner, he may be ſaid in the language of the prophet, *ſo far* to have *done evil things as he could* [r]. In a word, what the apoſtle James ſays of one member of the body, *viz.* the tongue, may be alſo ſaid of the reſt of them when abus'd to ſin, they are *a world of iniquity—they ſet on fire the courſe of nature, and are* themſelves *ſet on fire of hell* [s]. *They are unruly evils, full of deadly poiſon* [t]. And this may ſerve to explain our apoſtle's meaning, when he calls our ſins our *fleſh* [u], our *members* [v], and *the deeds of the body* [w].

(4.) The natural affinity that is between our bodies and other material things, is a great ſnare to us, and betrays us into ſin, as well as miſleads us into error, as we have obſerved before; ſo that we meet with almoſt as many temptations as we meet with ſenſible objects in the world: for theſe ſometimes work ſo much upon our love and hope and fear, according to the ſenſations of pleaſure or pain they occaſion us, that they ſteal away our affections from God, whom we ought *to love with all* our *heart* [x], *with all* our *ſoul and with all* our *ſtrength* [y]; in whom alone we

[r] Jer. 3. 5.
[s] James 3. 5, 6.
[t] Ver. 8.
[u] Gal. 5. 17.
[v] Col. 3. 5.
[w] Rom. 8. 13.
[x] Deut. 6. 5.
[y] Pſal. 62. 1, 2.

ought

ought to put our *truſt* [z], and whom alone we ought to *ſanctify in* our *hearts*, in *making him* our *fear and* our *dread* [a].

(5.) Laſtly, the natural groſſneſs and frailty of our bodies in this mortal ſtate, occaſion our moral imperfections and wanderings as well as our intellectual ones: they are not refin'd enough to receive, nor ſtrong enough to bear thoſe bright diſcoveries of the glory of God which are neceſſary to render us free from error, by keeping our minds continually intent on him, in viewing his infinite perfections; nor thoſe large effuſions of his love requiſite to preſerve us from ſin, by keeping our hearts conſtant and fervent in loving and deſiring him. No—theſe earthen veſſels are too mean, too narrow, and too brittle, to contain ſo vaſt a ſtock of heavenly treaſure, as is needful to make and keep us ſinleſs: and becauſe we *can't ſee God and live* [b] in this mortal ſtate, therefore we cannot live without ſin.

3. We are now to ſhew that the bodies of believers are burdenſom to them, becauſe they occaſion them much ſorrow and miſery, and prevent them of much comfort and joy. And,

1*ſt*, Upon their own account.

(1.) What has been already ſaid under the foregoing heads, proves this to a great degree. For ſeeing a believer deſires nothing

[z] Pſal. 20. 7.
[a] Iſa. 8. 13.
[b] Exod. 33. 20.

ſo

ſo much as immunity from error, and a clear view of truth, freedom from ſin, and a ſtate of conſummate purity and holineſs, that he may know God intimately, and love him perfectly; becauſe this intellectual and moral perfection together make up the glory and happineſs of a rational creature; it hence follows, that when he reflects on the contrary diſadvantages which attend his preſent ſtate, when he conſiders that his ſoul is lodg'd in a body, which, both like a veil, hinders him from a clear ſight of God, and as a falſe glaſs, gives him a deluſive view of creatures; when he feels it not only as a weight that retards his motion toward ſpiritual things, but as an inchanting bond that unites him to this material world: this muſt needs touch his mind after a very ſenſible manner, and give him no ſmall occaſion of ſorrow.

(2.) The frail bodies of the ſaints, as well as thoſe of other men, expoſe them to many of the common afflictions of this life. The ſtrict laws of union, by which our Creator has join'd human ſouls and bodies together, render the former very ſenſible of the various alterations which befal the latter: ſo that many little things that aſſault us outwardly, give us a great deal of trouble within; and thoſe injuries and diſtempers which our bodies ſuffer, are capable of exciting very painful and grievous ſenſations in our minds.

And

And becauſe we are neceſſitated, for the conſervation and entertainment of our bodies, to converſe with things agreeable to their nature, which are ſeldom procured without ſome difficulty, and never enjoyed without danger; our minds frequently anticipate trouble and miſery by their cares in ſeeking, and their fears of loſing theſe worldly accommodations.

(3.) Becauſe the near alliance of our bodies to the things of this world, is very apt to engage our minds into a fond and eager purſuit of them, it ſeems good to the allwiſe and gracious God, ſometimes to *hedge up* our *way with thorns* by his providence [c], to prevent our ſtraying from him, and to mix wormwood with our carnal delights, to wean us from them, and to fix our affections on things above; as alſo to try and exerciſe our faith and patience, and other graces, as he did thoſe of Job, by various diſappointments and afflictions.

Nay, ſometimes the diſorders and miſcarriages, into which our bodies enſnare our ſouls, provoke the holy and juſt God to withdraw the light of his countenance, and to hide himſelf from us in diſpleaſure; and while *the terrors of God ſet themſelves in array againſt* us [d], and his *dread makes* us *afraid* [e], our conſternation and ſorrow cannot but be very great. For thoſe who have taſted the

[c] Hoſ. 2. 6.
[d] Job 6. 4.
[e] Chap. 13. 21.

raviſhing ſweets of the divine love, and have felt the refreſhing influence of his peculiar favour, muſt needs be extremely uneaſy to labour under the want of ſo vaſt a bleſſing, and to feel the weight of his ſevere diſpleaſure: and tho *the ſpirit of a man will ſuſtain his infirmity*, yet *a wounded ſpirit who can bear* [f]?

Sometimes again the lively ſentiments of ſorrow that affect our ſouls on this account, are aggravated by the temptations of the devil, who endeavours to wound us afreſh with his *fiery darts* [g], and to add more weight to the preſſing burden we groan under. And theſe ſpiritual troubles ſometimes much affect our bodies, and render them ſo weak and ſickly, that we can't but complain in our prayers, in the words of the pſalmiſt, *There is no ſoundneſs in my fleſh becauſe of thine anger, neither is there any reſt in my bones becauſe of my ſin* [h], &c. And then the ſmart of this crazy ſtate of the body rebounds back on the ſoul, and makes her burden ſtill more uneaſy.

(4.) I may add, that as poverty, ſickneſs, and loſs of friends, together with ſpiritual troubles, fall often to the lot of believers, while they wear theſe mortal bodies; ſo they have theſe troubles increaſed by perſecution: for *all that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus*, muſt *ſuffer perſecution* [i]; and *thro'*

[f] Prov. 18. 14.
[g] Eph. 6. 16.
[h] Pſal. 38. 3.
[i] 2 Tim. 3. 12.

much

much tribulation they *muſt enter into the kingdom of God* [k]. 'Tis true, God does not call his people in every age, or at leaſt in every place, to ſeal their faith in him, and love to him, with their blood; but yet none of them muſt expect to eſcape the *cruel mockings* [l], the *hard ſpeeches* [m] and reproaches, and ſome other injuries with which the enemies of truth and holineſs are upon all occaſions ready to load them.

And tho the minds of good men are commonly ſuſtained by the comforts of the holy Spirit, ſo as to render them not only content, but joyful under the ſufferings they endure for *righteouſneſs ſake* [n]; yet theſe are to be number'd among their afflictions, ſeeing they are real miſeries which their mortal and frail ſtate expoſes them to, the ſmart of which they are more or leſs affected with, according to the meaſures of grace they receive for their ſupport: and that grace which makes them endure theſe thorns in the fleſh patiently, does not altogether hinder them from feeling them ſenſibly; ſo that they are *troubled on every ſide*, tho *not diſtreſſed*; *perſecuted*, tho *not forſaken*; *caſt down*, tho *not deſtroyed* [o]. And becauſe the ſpiritual joys that ſuſtain them are not at all times equal; they ſometimes feel ſo much of the weight of their ſufferings, that they are ready to

[k] Acts 14. 22.
[l] Heb. 11. 36.
[m] Jude 15.
[n] Mat. 5. 10, 11, 12.
[o] 2 Cor. 4. 8, 9.

petition heaven for a releaſe from theſe bodies that expoſe them to ſo many aſſaults, and to cry with the perſecuted prophet, *It is enough, now O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers* [p].

2*dly*, As a good man finds many occaſions of ſorrow in himſelf, ſo *the troubles of* his *heart are enlarged* [q] by the ſins and miſeries of others: his zeal for the honour of God expoſes him to afflictions on every ſide, and his extenſive charity makes him partake of the miſeries of his fellow-creatures.

(1.) When he looks abroad into the world, he beholds innumerable objects capable of exciting his ſorrow. *His righteous ſoul*, like that of juſt Lot, is *vexed from day to day, with the unlawful deeds*, and *filthy converſation of the wicked*, while he *ſees and hears* their impieties [r]: when he conſiders the wickedneſs and *oppreſſion* that is *under the ſun* [s], the injuſtice and barbarity of men one towards another; the indignities and affronts they offer their maker by their blaſphemy and profaneneſs; the cruelty they exerciſe on themſelves by their intemperance and ſenſuality; and the deplorable folly and ſtupidity of thoſe herds of ſinners who go merrily on towards deſtruction, who make *a mock at ſin* [t], *and like mad* men *caſt* abroad *fire-brands, arrows, and death*, ſaying, *are not* we *in ſport*?

[p] 1 Kings 19. 4.
[q] Pſal. 25. 17.
[r] 2 Pet. 2. 7, 8.
[s] Eccl. 4. 1.
[t] Prov. 14. 9.
[u] Prov. 26. 18, 19.

tho

tho they are to expect they will be thrown back into their own bosoms; who spend their precious moments in sin, and laugh and trifle away their time, even when they are ready to enter into everlasting burnings: when he sees, I say, and considers all this, it deeply affects his mind with those sentiments of grief, which the same kind of reflections occasioned the pious psalmist, and to which he gave some vent by addressing himself to his God in such expressions as these; *I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved, because they kept not thy word* [u]. *Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law* [v]. And again, *rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law* [w].

Nay, when he turns his eyes to the church of God, to allay that sorrow which the sad prospect of a *whole world lying in wickedness* [x] has given him; amongst those objects which are proper to inspire joy and pleasure, he'll find others no less capable of stirring up sorrow and anguish in his soul. The scandalous conversation of some professing godliness, even in the primitive church, drew sad complaints and tears from the blessed apostle Paul. *Many walk*, says he, *of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ* [y], &c.

[u] Psal. 119. 158.
[v] Ver. 53.
[w] Ver. 136.
[x] 1 John 5. 19.
[y] Philip. 3. 18, 19.

The pernicious principles which ſome entertain, the vicious practices which others embrace, the fierce contentions which ſome wickedly raiſe and foment, and which others weakly continue; the guile and ſubtlety of ſome that prove hypocrites, and the ignorance and weakneſs of others that are ſincere, all tend to aggravate the burden of a diſcerning chriſtian while he dwells in a mortal body, and is thereby obliged to converſe with mortal men.

(2.) He is of ſo publick a ſpirit, and of ſo charitable a temper, that while he dwells in the body, his eye, which beholds ſo many ſcenes of miſery, cannot but affect his heart [z]: ſo that he is not only a witneſs of the ſufferings of many miſerable people that fall under his notice, but a partner in their ſorrows too; and finds himſelf inclined by a generous ſympathy to *weep with them that weep* [a], as the apoſtle exhorts the Romans; of which good diſpoſition of mind himſelf was an eminent pattern, *Who is weak*, ſays he, *and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not* [b]? And the ſpirit of the holy Job was framed after the ſame manner, even in the time of his proſperity; *Did not I weep*, ſays he, *for him that was in trouble? was not my ſoul grieved for the poor* [c]?

But the afflictions of the church of God in general, or of thoſe particular members

[z] Lam. 3. 31.
[a] Rom. 12. 15.
[b] 2 Cor. 11. 29.
[c] Job 30. 25.

of

of it with whom he is especially conversant, cannot but make a very deep impression on his mind; and because he *prefers Jerusalem above his chief joy* [d], therefore her calamities are a chief occasion of his sorrow: so that he is sometimes ready to refuse to be comforted, and to cry with the prophet Isaiah, *Look away from me, I will weep bitterly: labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people* [e]. Or to utter the wish of the weeping prophet; *O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears; that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people* [f].

'Tis moreover worthy of a remark, that we are so much more sensible of the pains and sorrows, than we are of the delights and comforts of this life; that it is common for one affliction to give us great disturbance in the midst of many pleasures, and by the mixture of its bitter ferment, to make us disrelish all our temporal enjoyments.

These are the burdens which make the souls of believers desirous of changing their state; which is,

III. The third thing under consideration. And this is express'd,

(1.) Negatively; *not that we would be unclothed.*

[d] Psal. 137. 6.
[e] Isa. 22. 4.
[f] Jer. 9. 1. *See also*, Jer. 13. 17. and 14. 17.

(2.) Poſitively; *but clothed upon, that mortality might be ſwallowed up of life.*

Which words of the apoſtle, ſome will have to proceed from a ſuppoſition which they fanſy he had, that himſelf and ſome of his contemporaries ſhould live to the great day of the Lord, and that they ſhould not be unclothed of their bodies by death, but have them ſuddenly changed, like thoſe of Enoch and Elias; becauſe he elſewhere ſays, *Behold, I ſhew you a myſtery; we ſhall not all ſleep, but we ſhall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the laſt trump: for the trumpet ſhall ſound, and the dead ſhall be raiſed incorruptible, and we ſhall be changed* [g]. And again: *We which are alive, and remain to the coming of the Lord, ſhall not prevent them which are aſleep; for the Lord himſelf ſhall deſcend from heaven with a ſhout*, &c. *Then we which are alive and remain, ſhall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and ſo ſhall we ever be with the Lord* [h].

But I can't think this is the ſenſe of the apoſtle in the words of our text, becauſe he ſeems not to have expected the ſecond coming of Chriſt in the age wherein he lived, ſeeing he propheſies of thoſe troubles that ſhould befal the church in future ages, by the ſubtlety and power of antichriſt [i]; and becauſe it is not to be ſuppoſed that he had

[g] 1 Cor. 15. 51, 52.
[h] 1 Theſſ. 4. 15, 16, 17.
[i] 2 Theſſ. 2. 1 Tim. 4.

any

any expectation of surviving those many ages of sufferings that the church was to be exercised with, seeing God was pleased to reveal to him *how great things he should suffer for his name's sake* [k]; and seeing he was able to prophesy of his own dissolution in express terms, as he does to his son Timothy, *I am now ready to be offered*, says he, *and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course* [l], &c. Nay, that he and other christians not only expected, but desired to die, is evident from those words of his a little after our text; *We are confident and willing to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord* [m]: for this absence from the body expresses the soul's separation from it, and is inconsistent with a supposition of having their bodies transform'd in a moment without dying, as the bodies of those saints shall be, who shall be found alive at the second coming of Christ.

The meaning of the words rather seems to be thus, *We groan—not for that we would be unclothed*; q. d. "not simply and absolutely "to be divested of our bodies, *but to be clo-* "*thed upon*; q. d. to be adorn'd with glory "and bliss. Death is not desirable to us in "itself, but as it is the way to happiness and "immortality." For the saints have the sentiments of human nature common to other

[k] Acts 9. 16.
[l] 2 Tim. 4. 6, 7. *See also,* Acts 20. 22. 24, 38.
[m] 2 Cor. 5. 8.

men;

men; their ſouls are join'd to their bodies with the ſame bonds, and they are conſcious of inward reluctances when death is before them. Our bleſſed Saviour himſelf was not exempt from natural fears, but had an innocent averſation from miſery and death, which the reſolution of his will ſuperſeded, as appears by his prayer in the garden: *O my father, if it be poſſible let this cup paſs from me; nevertheleſs not as I will, but as thou wilt* [n]. Thus it is with believers, they naturally ſhrink at the apprehenſions of death; they do not deſire to die ſimply, becauſe they would be rid of their bodies, for they are a part of themſelves, and ſelf-preſervation is a principle deeply inlaid in human nature; but becauſe of two evils, one of which is inevitable, the leaſt is to be choſen. Seeing they muſt either be abſent from the body, or be abſent from God; be diſlodged from their earthly houſes, or infeſted with ſin and ſorrow; they cannot but on the moſt deliberate thoughts conclude, that 'tis beſt for them to be unclothed of fleſh and blood, which cannot, in its preſent condition, *inherit the kingdom of God* [o]; that they may be clothed with perfect ſanctity and glory, immediately upon the diſſolution of their bodies: and this in order to be clothed with glorious and immortal bodies, at the happy day of the reſurrection of the juſt. For I take both the glorification of the ſeparate ſouls of the ſaints,

[n] Mat. 26. 39. | [o] 1 Cor. 15. 50.

and their farther glory when inveſted with reſurrection-bodies, to be comprehended in the text. That the former is included, is evident from the apoſtle's ſaying a little after, *We are confident and willing rather to be abſent from the body, and to be preſent with the Lord* [p]: and that we are not to exclude the latter, appears from the laſt clauſe in our text, which the apoſtle mentions as the hope of believers, and the reaſon of their willingneſs to change their ſtate, namely, *that mortality might be ſwallowed up of life*; that is, that mortality might vaniſh and diſappear, and eternal life take place and ſucceed it, the full accompliſhment of which cannot be before the reſurrection, when theſe *mortal* bodies *ſhall have put on immortality*; for *then*, as this apoſtle expreſly tells us, *that ſaying*, equivalent to this, *ſhall be brought to paſs*, *Death is ſwallowed up in victory* [q]. I ſhall therefore conſider the words in both reſpects, ſeeing the immediate glory of the departed ſpirits of holy men, and their ultimate perfection and bliſs, when rejoin'd to their immortalized bodies, do both diſpoſe thoſe who hope for a ſhare in this glory, to a willingneſs to be unclothed of their mortal bodies.

(1.) The glory which the ſaints hope to arrive at immediately upon their leaving their bodies, inclines them to be willing they ſhould ſuffer a diſſolution by death.

[p] Ver. 8. | [q] 1 Cor. 15. 53, 54.

That

That a believer enters into a ſtate of bliſs immediately after death, depends upon a ſuppoſition of the immortality of the ſoul of man, and ſo of its capacity of happineſs or miſery when ſeparate from the body; which is a principle ſo generally allow'd, that I ſhall not inſiſt long on the proof of it, but content myſelf in ſhewing you, that our apoſtle firmly believ'd it, and expreſſes it plainly enough in ſeveral other paſſages of his epiſtles, as well as in this chapter.

Here he tells us, as has been obſerved before, that he expected to be *preſent with the Lord*, while *abſent from the body*[r]; which words are too plain for our purpoſe to need a comment. He elſewhere confeſſes himſelf in a great ſtraight, whether to chuſe life or death, becauſe of the great advantages he ſhould have on the one hand of enjoying the beatifick ſight of God by dying; and on the other of doing him and his church much ſervice by his life. *To me to live is Chriſt, and to die is gain. But if I live in the fleſh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I ſhall chuſe, I wot not; for I am in a ſtraight betwixt two, having a deſire to depart and to be with Chriſt, which is far better: nevertheleſs to abide in the fleſh is more needful for you*[s], &c. Now can it be thought if he had believed that his ſoul would be rendred by death as inſenſible and unactive as his body, that he would have put this ſuppoſed deep

[r] Ver. 8. | [s] Phil. 1. 21, 22, &c.

ſleep

ſleep in the ballance, againſt a capacity and opportunity of ſerving God and his church here in the honourable ſtation allotted him; and thereby of enjoying communion with his Lord and maſter in his ordinances at preſent, and of adding weight to his immortal crown of glory in the world to come? Is not a ſtate of ſerving God, tho attended with imperfection and ſufferings, much to be preferred to an utter incapacity of ſerving him? Is it not infinitely better to ſee the divine being, tho *as thro' a glaſs* [s], and obſcurely, than not to ſee him at all? and to love him after an imperfect manner, than to be unable to form the leaſt feeble deſire toward him? and for the ſoul to follow him weakly, than to be deprived of all ſpiritual motion? Is it to be imagined, that the wiſe and holy apoſtle would have been held in a doubtful ſuſpenſe under theſe conſiderations, which would eaſily have ſuggeſted themſelves upon a ſuppoſition of the mortality of his ſoul? and would he have confeſſed he found any difficulty to determine his judgment in ſo plain a caſe? Again, It is not to be denied, that he believed the ſoul of man capable of enjoying bliſs when ſeparated from the body, ſeeing he profeſſes himſelf unable to determine, whether his own were not once ſo ſeparated for a while; *whether in the body*, ſays he, *or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth*; when he was *caught up to the third heaven*, and

[s] 1 Cor. 13. 12.

fill'd with divine pleaſures in hearing *words unutterable* [t] by mortals here below. And why does he ſpeak of *the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect*, as now making a part of the univerſal church, and as the companions of angels in the other world, *Heb.* 12. 22, 23. if thoſe ſpirits are in the ſame condition with the bodies they once poſſeſs'd, in a ſtate of inſenſibility and death? And does he not call the body a tabernacle in the text, to ſignify that it is ſeparable from its ſpiritual inhabitant?

That which ſeems to induce ſome, notwithſtanding theſe and ſuch other paſſages of ſcripture, to imagine the ſoul to be mortal, is the certain knowledge they have of the mortality of the body: but is it reaſonable to conclude, becauſe matter is diviſible and diſſoluble, that therefore ſpirits may be divided and diſſolved too? that becauſe extended ſubſtances are ſeen to corrupt, therefore ſubſtances, capable of reaſoning and willing, muſt needs undergo the ſame change? and becauſe the organs of the body are rendred uſeleſs by death, that the faculties of the ſoul all paſs under the ſame fate? What ground is there for ſuch wild conſequences? what appearance of reaſon in ſuch vain imaginations?

If then we may ſafely conclude with our apoſtle, that the ſeparate ſouls of the ſaints are capable of happineſs; we may as well

[t] 2 Cor. 12. 2, 3, 4.

conclude

conclude with him too, that they ſhall enjoy it, when ſtrip'd of thoſe bodies which keep them abſent from him, *with whom is the fountain of life* [u] and bliſs; that inſtead of earthly houſes they ſhall poſſeſs heavenly manſions, and retiring from the viſible, be made happy in the inviſible world: that when the eyes of their bodies are clos'd with the deep ſleep of death, thoſe of their minds ſhall ſee the Lord; and when their blood ceaſes to move in their veins, their wills ſhall be moſt vigorouſly inclined towards him who is the proper object of their deſires, and center of their reſt.

But the completion of their bliſs will be,

(2.) When their ſouls ſhall be clothed with glorious bodies; the expectation of which, as well as of the immediate glory of their ſouls, tends to diſarm death of its terror, and to make them willing to be unclothed of their mortal bodies.

This hope is grounded upon ſo many expreſs teſtimonies of ſcripture, ſome of which prophetically aſſure the univerſal accompliſhment of it, as others hiſtorically atteſt the fact itſelf in ſeveral particular inſtances of perſons raiſed from the dead, that 'tis not neceſſary for me to inſiſt on the proof of it; eſpecially ſeeing all that deſerve the name of chriſtians, and almoſt all that aſſume it, profeſs the belief of it. 'Tis more to my preſent purpoſe to ſay ſomething of the excellent

[u] Pſal. 36. 9.

pro-

properties of thoſe bodies which ſhall obtain this happy reſurrection.

We are aſſured by our apoſtle, that both the matter and form of them ſhall be greatly refined; thoſe earthly bodies ſhall become celeſtial; that which is *ſown in corruption, ſhall be raiſed in incorruption*; that which is *ſown in diſhonour, raiſed in glory*; that which is *ſown in weakneſs, raiſed in power*; and that which is *ſown a natural body, raiſed a ſpiritual body* [v]. Their matter ſhall be ſo highly purified and exalted, that in oppoſition to their former groſſneſs and earthlineſs, they are term'd ſpiritual and heavenly bodies; for matter is ſaid to be ſpiritual when 'tis much refin'd. And there is a vaſt diſparity in this reſpect among material things: what a mighty difference do we ſee between the earth on which we tread, and that glorious luminary that inlightens the world? yet both are material ſubſtances. Does not the great author of the world by this inſtance teach us, that he is able to advance the matter of our vile bodies to a very high degree of purity and fineneſs? for our bleſſed Saviour aſſures us, that *the righteous ſhall ſhine forth as the ſun in the kingdom of their father* [w]; and the prophet Daniel, ſpeaking of the reſurrection, ſays, *They that be wiſe ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteouſneſs as the ſtars for ever and ever* [x].

[v] 1 Cor. 15. 40, 41, &c.
[w] Mat. 13. 43.
[x] Dan. 12. 2, 3.

And

And of this glory God was pleaſed to give ſome repreſentation in the dazling luſtre of Moſes and Stephen; but eſpecially in the transfiguration of our Saviour, whoſe *face ſhined as the ſun, and* whoſe *raiment was white as the light* [y], in the view of ſome of his diſciples.

And the above-mentioned expreſſions may as well be interpreted deſcriptive of the beauty and elegancy of the form of thoſe raiſed bodies, as of the fineneſs of their matter; for it is not to be doubted but the one will be ſuitable to the other. And there's reaſon to ſuppoſe that all the beauties of this preſent world may paſs for pieces of deformity, in compariſon with the exact ſhape and proportion, the charming features, the bright complexion, and the ſweet and noble air of thoſe heavenly bodies, which ſhall be *faſhion'd like to the glorious body of* our Lord, *according to the working whereby he is able even to ſubdue all things unto himſelf* [z].

And it may well be concluded that they will be as uſeful and ſerviceable as they will be ornamental and glorious; that the happineſs of the ſouls of the ſaints ſhall be advanced by means of their re-union to theſe ſpiritual bodies, which the Almighty muſt needs frame for excellent purpoſes; that inſtead of being clogs and weights, they ſhall be as wheels and wings to the happy minds that ſhall poſſeſs and govern them; that inſtead

[y] Mat. 17. 2. [z] Phil. 3. 21.

of being receptacles of ſin, they'll be veſſels of ſanctity: that whereas now they are as thick veils that hinder their proſpect, they'll then be as tranſparent mediums to promote their knowledge: and as they now are like mourning weeds, and occaſion *the ſpirit of heavineſs*, they ſhall then become *garments of praiſe* [a], and inſtruments of joy and melody. O happy ſtate! when the body ſhall no more divert the mind from contemplating the divine being, or ſeduce the heart from loving him; no more be diſturb'd with diſeaſes to give the ſoul either pain or fear; no more be liable to corruption and death: but become an occaſion of the improvement of her wiſdom and holineſs, and of the advancement of her eternal joy and happineſs.

This is ſomething of that which is to be collected from thoſe deſcriptions the ſcripture gives of the future ſtate of the immortal bodies of the ſaints. And if the veſſel ſhall be thus adorn'd, how glorious will the treaſure be that ſhall be lodged in it? If the houſe ſhall be ſo embelliſhed, how bright and beautiful will the noble inhabitant of it be? For the Almighty is a God of order, and does all things in due proportion: therefore 'tis but reaſonable to think that the ſouls of the ſaints ſhall be as much ſuperior to their bodies in their kind and degree of glory, as they are in the rank and order of nature. But after the moſt lively ſallies of fancy, and the ſtrongeſt

[a] Iſa. 61. 3.

efforts of thought, we must content ourselves with imperfect notions of this state of unconceivable felicity; for a particular and exact *knowledge of it is too wonderful for us, it is high, we cannot attain unto it* [b]. Yet the divine word does certify us in general of the thing itself, that the souls of the righteous, and in due time their bodies too, shall inherit glory: so that they have reason to say, with an assurance like that of our apostle, *We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens* [c]. Or like that of Job; *I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And tho after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, tho my reins be consumed within me* [d]. Or that of the apostle John; *Beloved, now we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is* [e]. Tho *it doth not yet* fully *appear what they shall be*, yet this they *know*, they *shall be like* God, *and see him as he is*; they shall always behold his face, and always be enamour'd of his beauty; always receiving large manifestations of favour from him, and always returning the highest expressions of

[b] Psal. 139. 6.
[c] 2 Cor. 5. 1.
[d] Job 19. 25, 26, 27.
[e] 1 John 3. 2.

love to him; ever moving towards him by the moſt ardent deſires, and ever reſting in him with the moſt perfect ſatisfaction.

And now is it any wonder, if, on the one hand, the weighty burdens which a ſaint bears, and on the other the perfect reſt and happineſs which he expects, make him,

IV. Expreſs both his great ſenſe of the weight that preſſes him, and his fervent deſire of the deliverance promiſed him, by *groaning*?

For this term as well ſignifies a deſire of eaſe, as a ſenſe of pain; a longing after future happineſs, as well as an uneaſineſs under preſent miſery; becauſe theſe ſentiments meet together in the ſoul, and mutually excite one another: the more a man feels his miſery, the more he deſires deliverance; and the more he longs for a ſtate of bliſs, the more uneaſy he is in a ſtate of trouble. And therefore groaning and deſiring are uſed in ſcripture as terms of like import; as appears by thoſe words of the pſalmiſt, *Lord, all my deſire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee* [f]. And as our apoſtle ſays, *the whole creation groans* [g]—to ſignify, what he before calls, the *earneſt expectation of the creation* [h]; ſo he expreſſes the deſire and hope of believers after the ſame manner: *And not only they*, ſays he, *but ourſelves alſo who have*

[f] Pſal. 38. 9.
[g] Rom. 8. 22.
[h] Ver. 19.

received

received the firſt-fruits of the ſpirit, even we ourſelves groan within ourſelves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body [i]. A paſſage that runs parallel with our text, which ſays, believers *groan—to be clothed upon, that mortality might be ſwallowed up of life*; and with thoſe words juſt before it, *For in this we groan earneſtly, deſiring to be clothed upon with our houſe which is from heaven* [k].

Tho the ſouls of the wicked, as well as thoſe of the righteous, are incumber'd with mortal bodies, which occaſion them many of the ſame kind of evils, and ſome of them to a far greater degree; for if their afflictions are not always ſo many, their errors and ſins are more: and tho they deſire happineſs in general as well as the others, yet they do not groan under the weight of theſe burdens, and after that glorious ſtate of liberty we have been diſcourſing of, as the others do.

The reaſons why the deep ſenſe of theſe grievances, and earneſt aſpirations after deliverance are to be found in the minds of holy men, and in theirs only, deſerve to be, at leaſt briefly, inquired into.

(1.) The ſtrong and lively convictions a regenerate man has received, both of the great evil and folly of ſin, and of the excellency and beauty of a ſtate of perfect holineſs, which is not to be enjoy'd but in the other world, make him weary of his pre-

[i] Ver. 23. [k] 1 Cor. 5. 2.

ſent ſtate, and very deſirous of a change: he is ſo far enlightned by the ſpirit of truth, and he ſometimes looks upon ſin with ſo ſtrict and ſevere an eye, that he ſees that deformity and uglineſs in it, which others never diſcern, or ſo much as imagine. He meaſures the guilt of ſin, by the object againſt whom it is committed; and accounts it infinitely evil, becauſe directly oppoſite to that God who is infinitely good. He weighs his iniquities together with the many aggravations that attend them; and calls to mind againſt how much grace and love, againſt how much light and knowledge, againſt how many calls and warnings from God, and againſt how many vows and reſolutions of his own he has ſinned. His conſcience is too much enlightned, and too ſenſible to be appeaſed and lull'd aſleep by the many falſe-gloſſes which others put on the divine laws; and by the fooliſh extenuations and excuſes they employ, who *cover their tranſgreſſions as Adam, by hiding their iniquity in their boſom* [l]. And the more his mind is illuminated, the more ſenſibly is his heart affected with his guilt and the conſequences of it; ſo that when he *remembers his affliction and his miſery, the wormwood and the gall, his ſoul is humbled* in him [m]. Thus the enlargement of his knowledge gives him occcaſion of trouble on this account, as we have ſhewn the imperfection of it does on ſeveral others;

[l] Job 31. 33. [m] Lam. 3. 19, 20.

and

and in this reſpect he finds the ſaying of the wiſe man verified, *In much wiſdom is much grief, and he that increaſeth knowledge, increaſeth ſorrow* [n]. A ſorrow which ſometimes accents his complaints with groans, like that of the apoſtle, *O wretched man that I am! who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death* [o]?

And the ſame light that diſcovers to him the deformity of ſin, ſhews him the contrary beauty of holineſs; *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God*, which he has received *thro' the face of Jeſus Chriſt* [p], makes him very deſirous of bearing a nearer reſemblance to him, to become a copy as like that divine original, as the nature of the ſubject will allow: in a word, to *be holy, as he is holy* [q]. While the wicked, *whoſe minds the God of this world has blinded* [r], have quite different thoughts of moral purity, they ſee no ſuch excellency and lovelineſs in it; and while you attribute perfect holineſs to the Almighty, as his eſſential glory and beauty, are ready to ſay in their hearts, not only as the daughters of Jeruſalem did to the ſpouſe concerning Chriſt, *What is thy beloved more than another beloved* [s]? but as the Jews ſaid of him, *he hath no form nor comelineſs; and when we ſhall ſee him, there is no beauty that we ſhou'd deſire him* [s].

[n] Eccleſ. 1. 18.
[o] Rom. 7. 24.
[p] 2 Cor. 4. 6.
[q] 1 Pet. 1. 15, 16.
[r] 2 Cor. 4. 4.
[s] Cant. 5. 9.
[s] Iſa. 53. 2.

(2.) A believer has by the impreſſion of grace received a ſpiritual inclination to holineſs, which makes him *delight in the law of God after the inward man* [t]: and therefore the oppoſition which indwelling ſin makes to this divine principle, the many rubs he meets with from that *law in his members which wars againſt the law of his mind* [v], whereby the vigor of his ſpiritual motion towards *him whom his ſoul loves* [u] is often abated, can't chuſe but give him much diſturbance, when he ſeriouſly recollects himſelf, and make him groan after a ſtate of perfect conformity to God, and after a compleat enjoyment of him. This makes him often wiſh he could mount from a ſinful world in Elijah's chariot, to throw himſelf into the arms of his bleſſed Lord; tho he knows he muſt drop his body, as the other did his mantle, at the aſcent. Whereas the unregenerate, whoſe minds are not tinctur'd with the love of God, who have no propenſion to holineſs, but are violently carried along by the ſtream of their corrupt paſſions, feel not the like reluctances and conflicts in their ſouls, and therefore make a mock at thoſe ſins which make the others groan.

(3.) Thoſe who have been reſcued from the ſlavery of the devil, and have deſerted his kingdom, are the chief objects of his rage and malice; the fury of that roaring lion,

[t] Rom. 7. 22.
[v] Ver. 23.
[u] Cant. 1. 7.

and

and the ſubtlety of that old ſerpent, can't but occaſion them many fears and troubles, becauſe they are not ignorant of the danger of his artful devices, nor inſenſible of the pain of his cruel buffetings: and tho they have the honour and happineſs to conquer him at laſt, yet the wounds they ſometimes receive from his fiery darts, fill their ſouls with horror and anguiſh, during the fierce combats in which they engage; which makes a believer often take up a complaint of his incommodious dwelling in the tabernacle of his body, not unlike that of the pſalmiſt, *Wo is me that I ſojourn in Meſech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar; my ſoul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace* [w]. While on the other hand, the tempter endeavours to rock the wicked aſleep with ſenſual delights; and by entertaining them with a thouſand dreams of imaginary happineſs, makes them deſirous of a continuance in this preſent world, as their only paradiſe.

(4.) The experience of a believer, who has not only on ſeveral occaſions taken a near proſpect of the world, and ſo diſcerned the vanity of it; but has alſo *taſted and ſeen that the Lord is good* [x], makes him undervalue the periſhing ſweets of this life, and earneſtly deſire a full enjoyment of the ſubſtantial pleaſures of the other. This makes him argue as Jonathan did, concerning the honey he

[w] Pſal. 120. 5, 6. | [x] Pſal. 34. 8.

found

found in the wilderneſs [y]; if this little taſte has ſo enlightned my eyes, and ſuſtained my heart, how much more both light and pleaſure ſhall I receive when I ſhall enjoy a full repaſt of the ſame dainties? He ſo diſreliſhes the *meat that periſheth*, after having taſted of *the bread of life* [z], that he cries out with the diſciples, *Lord, evermore give me this bread* [a]; and having taſted of this *old wine*, he does *not deſire new*, becauſe he is convinced *the old is better* [b]. The pious ſoul, that has had ſome little glances of her beloved, *ſtanding behind the wall, looking forth at the windows, and ſhewing himſelf thro' the lattice* [c], longs for a clearer interview; and having heard his charming voice at a diſtance [d], deſires his nearer approach, and the ſatisfaction of his kind embraces. Whereas the unregenerate, who have never been able to taſte the ſweetneſs of the heavenly manna, deſpiſe it as *light bread*, and prefer it to the *fleſh-pots* and *garlick* of Egypt [e]: and becauſe they are unacquainted with the delicious reliſh of thoſe *rivers of pleaſure*, which flow *at the right hand* of God [f], having never taſted any drops of thoſe living waters, find no ſpiritual thirſt after them; but deſire rather to lick the *duſt of the earth* [g], as if the ſerpent's curſe

[y] 1 Sam. 14. 29, 30.
[z] John 6. 27.
[a] Ver. 33, 34, 35.
[b] Luke 5. 39.
[c] Cant. 2. 9.
[d] Ver. 8.
[e] Num. 21. 5.
[f] Pſal. 16. 11.
[g] Gen. 3. 14.

were

were to be eſteemed above heavenly bleſſings.

(5.) A holy man who lives by faith, is able to diſcern things that are inviſible; and by means of this divine perſpective, to bring diſtant things near, and to render future things preſent; ſo that all intervals of time and ſpace almoſt quite diſappear during the lively exerciſe of this grace: and 'tis no wonder if ſuch diſcoveries of that glory to one that has an aſſured intereſt therein, raiſe fervent deſires in his ſoul after the enjoyment of it; and together with the preſſure of the burden he groans under here below, make him ſometimes ſigh out the words of the pſalmiſt's wiſh, *O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at reſt* [h]; while thoſe that live by ſenſe, who are *without hope, and without God in the world* [i], either believe not that there is ſuch a ſtate of bliſs to be enjoy'd by any, at leaſt that they are like to have any portion in it themſelves; or are ſo brutiſh as to deſpiſe thoſe pure joys, becauſe they are unattainable in this life, and becauſe they are only prepared for, and adapted to thoſe minds which are refined by grace; an holy conformity to the image of God, being the neceſſary condition of the beatifick viſion of his face.

[h] Pſal. 55. 6. [i] Eph. 2. 12.

Having

Having now paſſed thro' the ſeveral heads of diſcourſe propoſed, I ſhall add ſome few reflections by way of uſe. And,

1. From the deſcription our text gives of the frail body of man, in calling it a tabernacle, I might take occaſion to ſhew not only that the body and ſoul are ſubſtances of a very different kind, that the one differs from the other in ſeveral reſpects, as the inhabitant from the houſe or tent he dwells in; and that the ſoul is ſeparable from the body, and may ſubſiſt, and be capable of happineſs or miſery when abſent from it, as a man may live when ſtripp'd of his garment, or exil'd from his habitation, which we have in ſome meaſure prov'd already; but farther, that the ſoul is as much more excellent than the body, as a prince is preferable to the tent wherein he lodges; that there is no compariſon to be made between the faculties of the former, and the organs of the latter, tho theſe are *curiouſly and wonderfully made* [k]; and that the body derives its principal beauty as well as uſefulneſs, from the reſidence of the ſoul in it, without which it is a uſeleſs lump of inanimate matter, its members all become unactive, its organs all motionleſs, and its figure ſoon changes and diſſolves into corruption and duſt. But I paſs over theſe conſiderations, to infer from hence,

[k] Pſal. 139. 14, 15.

2. That

2. That it highly concerns us to make our ſouls our principal care, and to this end to beware of ſpending too much time, and of employing too many thoughts in making proviſion for our bodies. What wiſe man would be at any great expence in adorning and beautifying a feeble and decaying cottage, which the next violent blaſt of wind is likely to level with the ground? Who but a fool will deny himſelf neceſſaries, that he may furniſh his houſe with ſuperfluities, or will ſtarve his body to trim his clothes? And who but a greater fool than he will ſuffer his precious ſoul to pine and languiſh under ſpiritual poverty, while he pampers his vile body with the greateſt luxury; and will curiouſly deck this with gay apparel, while the other is left unadorn'd and naked, as unworthy of his care?

3. Seeing the ſaints, however burden'd at preſent, have the proſpect of celeſtial glory before them; this may ſerve to convince the world, that their ſtate, tho conſider'd with the greateſt attendance of afflictions, is to be preferred to that of the wicked. 'Tis true, we have before granted that the former find many occaſions of ſorrow, which the latter are unacquainted with; and that they are much more preſs'd than theſe, with ſome circumſtances of thoſe troubles that are common to both. And let us farther ſuppoſe that a holy man's life were a continued ſcene of calamities; ſuppoſe his ſorrows were yet more

more piercing and grievous, and his mind more sensible of grief, and more inclin'd to ruminate the wormwood and gall of his sufferings; and suppose these were prolong'd to many thousands of years, they would still prove *light* and *short* afflictions, when oppos'd to that *exceeding weight of* eternal *glory* [l] which raises his expectation; and when compar'd with that load of misery and anguish, which the wicked must groan under to eternity.

Nay, the advantage would certainly fall on the side of the righteous, if they should ballance accounts with the wicked, in regard of their present happiness in this life. For tho a holy man has many great afflictions, he has also many peculiar blessings; and if his *sufferings abound, so does his consolation* too [m]: besides, the troubles of the world the less surprize him, because he is taught to expect them; and the pleasures of it are the less desirable to him, because he has learn'd the vanity of them, and because his *affections* are *set on things above* [n]. Whereas the trouble of an earthly mind is inexpressible, when the delights of the world forsake it, because it hath nothing left to lean upon, or to take complacency in: so that if you deprive a sensualist of those objects that occasion carnal pleasure, he is ready to cry out, *Ye have taken away my gods; and what have I more* [o]*!*

l. 2 Cor. 4. 17.
m 2 Cor. 1. 5.
n Col. 3. 2.
o Judges 18. 24.

And

And the many reſtleſs deſires and troubleſome projects that agitate his mind, while he purſues the things of the world; and the perplexing fears that often diſturb him while he enjoys them, as well as the mortal ſorrows that bow down his ſpirit when he loſes them, render him for the moſt part very uneaſy. Add to this the frequent gripes of a guilty conſcience, thoſe ſpiritual terrors that daunt the ſtouteſt heart, and ſhake the firmeſt courage, which are often heighten'd toward the period of his days; when the amazed ſoul finds herſelf hovering over an abyſs of eternal miſery, and is unable to lay hold on any thing capable of ſuſtaining her from ſinking into that horrible pit; and when the diſeaſes of the body add weight to the troubles of the mind, eſpecially when ſickneſs and death have been haſtened by intemperance and folly, and the bones are wrack'd with pain, becauſe *fill'd* with *the ſins of youth* [p].

Whereas the laſt days of a ſaint are commonly his beſt, becauſe *there is hope in his end* [q]: his joy increaſes when he ſees himſelf near the confines of the land of promiſe, after a weary pilgrimage; and ready to lay aſide his armour, to bear the palm of victory, and to wear the crown of triumph: his ſoul ſprings for joy, when ſhe finds her ſhackles looſen'd, and her wings preparing for a ſpeedy flight to *the excellent glory* [r]. *Mark the*

[p] Job 20. 11.
[q] Jer. 31. 17.
[r] 2 Pet. 1. 17.

perfect

perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace [r].

4. This may adminiſter comfort to believers under all their grievances, and ſhould fortify them againſt the fear of death. Why ſhould death be formidable to them, whoſe *life is hid with Chriſt in God* [s]? Why ſhould that be a terror to them, which is an occaſion of their higheſt advantage [t]? Death will only unclothe them, that Chriſt may adorn them; take off their mortal rags, that they may be inveſted with robes of immortality; knock off their galling fetters, that they may enter into *the glorious liberty of the children of God* [v]; and rend the intercepting veil, that they may *ſee* him *face to face* [u]. Seeing the king of terrors acts rather the part of a friend than of an enemy to them, in ſilencing their complaints, in appeaſing their groans, in drying up their tears, and in accompliſhing their wiſhes: and ſeeing the diſſolution of their bodies, is in order to their reſurrection, the pulling down of theſe frail cottages, in order to raiſe noble buildings out of them; they may well cry out with our apoſtle, *O death, where is thy ſting? O grave, where is thy victory* [w]?

5. This ſhould moderate the grief of the relations and friends of thoſe who *ſleep in Jeſus* [x]: they are exhorted by our apoſtle,

[r] Pſal. 37. 37.
[s] Col. 3. 3.
[t] Phil. 1. 21.
[v] Rom. 8. 21.
[u] 1 Cor. 13. 12.
[w] 1 Cor. 15. 55.
[x] 1 Theſſ. 4. 14.

to

to reſtrain their trouble, and not to *ſorrow like thoſe that have no hope*[y]. We ought to conſider, that tho their ſouls have abſented themſelves from their bodies, they are *preſent with the Lord*; and tho theſe are left dead, they ſhall one day revive again, and receive a glorious form. 'Tis true, the ſouls of the wicked ſhall again be clothed with their bodies too; but their reſurrection will be more dreadful than their death, becauſe they ſhall then put on their bodies, as malefactors do their clothes in order to be drawn to execution: whereas the ſouls of the ſaints ſhall put on their glorified bodies at the reſurrection, as a bride decks herſelf with ſplendid attire the joyful morning of her nuptials.

After all, ſomething remains to be ſaid concerning our deceaſed brother, whoſe death has given the occaſion of our preſent aſſembling; tho I ſhall not ſay much, partly becauſe I think it is not neceſſary in an aſſembly that knew him ſo well; and partly, becauſe I think that great modeſty of ſpeech is to be obſerved in ſuch places, and on ſuch occaſions as theſe; and that it becomes thoſe who preach, rather to inſtruct the living, than to commend the dead; and to excite men to praiſe their Creator, rather than to amuſe them with panegyricks on their fellow-creatures. However, thus much I preſume I may warrantably ſay of our reverend

[y] Ver. 13.

brother, whoſe ſoul is fled from us to the regions of glory, that he in a good meaſure experimentally knew what we have been explaining to you. He knew what it was to be burden'd while he lodged in an earthly tabernacle, and thro' the grace of God he knew what it was to be ſupported under the weight of it, thro' the many ſervices and ſufferings he underwent for the ſake of his Lord and maſter, whom he began to follow before he was far advanc'd in years, and who was the ſupport of his old age, as well as the *guide of his youth*. He knew what it was to groan under the burden of ſin, having labour'd for many months together under the anguiſh of a wounded ſpirit, and under the violent aſſaults of the ſubtle tempter; from which he was at length happily delivered by the favour of God, who diſpell'd the black clouds of horror that benighted his ſoul; and made him glad with the light of his countenance, which almoſt conſtantly ſhin'd on his ſpirit thro'out the remainder of his days.

During his laſt ſickneſs, which proved the means of his diſſolution, he ſeem'd to have much peace, and at ſome times great joy in his ſpirit; declaring himſelf the better ſatisfied in this ſtroke of the divine hand, becauſe he was taken ill while he was employing himſelf in his miniſterial work, and expreſſing a very great reſignation of mind to the will of God, often ſaying *he was content*,

tent, becauſe in the hands of God; tho he rather choſe to be unclothed of his mortal body, and to be with Chriſt, than to languiſh a long time under the burden of age and ſickneſs, and to live in a condition uncapable of rendering that ſervice to God he was wont to do.

He paſs'd the time of his illneſs without any remarkable cloud on his ſoul, ſo far as I could diſcern, who frequently viſited him; and that comfort and joy which ſuſtain'd his ſoul was temper'd with humility and contrition. He join'd the ſelf-abaſing remembrance of his ſins to the hope he conceived for pardon; and expreſs'd himſelf deeply ſenſible of his own unworthineſs, as well as firmly aſſured of his intereſt in the all-ſufficient ſacrifice and interceſſion of his Redeemer.

God was pleaſed graciouſly to continue to him the exerciſe of his reaſon almoſt to the laſt moments of his life. And but a very little before his exit, after having taken his ſolemn leave of his children and grand-children, and implored the divine bleſſing on them, he with an audible and diſtinct voice, committed *his ſpirit into the hands of God.*

Thus he liv'd, and thus he expir'd, leaving a ſweet ſavour behind him, to the praiſe and glory of the grace of God, who alone can ſupport the ſoul under the weight of a declining body, and can refreſh her with

ſpiritual pleaſures, while the agonies of death are upon her.

To conclude: Let us *follow* him *as he followed Chriſt* [z]; let us endeavour to alleviate the burdens we feel, by the proſpect of the *glory which is to be revealed* [a]; let us *poſſeſs our ſouls* in *patience*, and our bodies *in ſanctification and honour* [b]; that when we come to put them off by death, we may chearfully reſign them to be depoſited in the grave, in hope of reaſſuming them at the reſurrection, endowed with noble qualities like thoſe which adorn the glorified body of our Saviour; who, to procure us this privilege, was pleaſed to condeſcend to dwell in an earthly tabernacle like ours, and to be preſs'd down to the very duſt with the weight of our ſins [c], our ſickneſſes and our ſorrows [d], and now ever lives to make interceſſion for his people, that *where he is, there they may be alſo* [e], that they who *die in the Lord* may ever live with him: for *bleſſed are the dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they may reſt from their labours, and their works do follow them* [f].

[z] 1 Cor. 11. 1.
[a] Luke 21. 19.
[b] 1 Theſſ. 4. 4.
[c] Iſa. 53. 4.
[d] Mat. 8. 17.
[e] John 17. 24.
[f] Rev. 14. 13.

A ſermon preach'd on *Thurſday* the 7th of *September*, 1704. being the day appointed by her majeſty for a ſolemn thankſgiving to almighty God for the late glorious victory obtained over the *French* and *Bavarians* at *Blenheim* near *Hochſtet*, by the confederate forces under the command of the duke of *Marlborough*.

SERMON V.

Judges V. 31.

So let all thy enemies periſh, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the ſun when he goes forth in his might.——

THESE words are the concluſion of a ſong of triumph, occaſioned by an eminent victory which God was pleaſed to give the troops of Iſrael, under the conduct of Deborah and Barak, over the army of Jabin king of Canaan, which was commanded by

Siſera: and 'tis not eaſy to imagine, that any thing could be better ſaid at the cloſe of ſuch a ſong; for from the grateful reflection here made on the glorious things God had already done for his people, their hope is rais'd to expect like future bleſſings from his favourable providence. Their diſtreſs under the tyranny of Jabin was very great, their victory over him very ſignal and compleat; and the thankſgiving of Deborah and Barak, together with the reſt of the joyful people who ſhared in the common ſalvation, was becoming ſo great an inſtance of the divine compaſſion and goodneſs: and as *their mouths were filled with joy, and their tongues with ſinging* [s], and their hearts were full of gratitude to the Almighty for the great victory they had obtain'd; ſo they conclude their ſong of praiſe, full of expectation of the like wonders the ſame divine hand would hereafter effect in favour of the church. *So let all thy enemies periſh, O Lord:* q. d. "Juſt "as this potent army of Canaanites has been "routed and overthrown by thy almighty "hand; ſo let the reſt of thy enemies, who "oppreſs thy church, and ſeek the ruin of "thy inheritance, be themſelves defeated "and deſtroyed. Compleat, O Lord, the "work thou haſt begun, till thou haſt a-"veng'd thyſelf of all thy implacable ad-"verſaries."

[s] Pſal. 126. 2.

And

And let them that love him be as the ſun when he goes forth in his might. q. d. " Let " all who love the cauſe and intereſt, the " name and honour of the living and true " God, ſtill proſper in their juſt deſigns and " glorious enterprizes: let thoſe who govern " his people, let thoſe who fight their bat- " tles and lead them on to victory; let all " who love their God and them become vi- " gorous and glorious, as the riſing ſun when " he comes forth to run his race, ſcattering " with his preſence both the darkneſs of the " night and the miſt of the morning."

The Hebrew idiom will bear theſe words to be interpreted either as a petition, *ſo let thy enemies periſh*, &c. or as a prediction, *ſo ſhall thy enemies periſh, O Lord.* And if it be conſider'd only as a petition, ſince it is the prayer of a propheteſs who was divinely inſpir'd, it muſt be granted that it was form'd in her mind by the ſpirit of God, in order to be effectually anſwer'd, for he inſpires no vain requeſts; and therefore contains in it the nature of a prophecy.

'Tis moreover worthy a remark, that the glorious victories wrought in the time of the judges, as well as thoſe before in the days of Abraham and Moſes, and thoſe obtain'd afterwards in the time of the kings of Judah and Iſrael, and the eminent deliverance of the church from the Babylonian captivity, ſeem all to have been figurative repreſentations of the like, nay yet greater glory and

ſucceſs, with which God will crown his church in the latter ages of the world, and of the compleat deliverance he will give her from the captivity of myſtical Babylon [h]. And therefore as we are now aſſembled to look back with joy and gratitude on the late glorious victory it has pleaſed God to give the confederate arms againſt thoſe of a great modern tyrant; ſo we may thence take occaſion to look forward with hope for the like future ſucceſs againſt all the enemies of God and his church, and to ſing in concert with Deborah and the reſt of the triumphing Iſraelites, *So let all thy enemies periſh, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the ſun when he goes forth in his might.*

In which words we may conſider,

I. The grateful reflection that is made on the eminent victory God had lately given his church over their enemies, to which our text obviouſly refers. *So let all thy enemies periſh*, &c. *i. e.* juſt ſo as the Canaanites periſhed in the late battle celebrated in this triumphant ſong.

II. The hopeful proſpect that is hence taken of the ſucceſs to be expected by the church on like occaſions; the prophetick view of her future victories and triumphs. *Let thy enemies periſh*; or, *thy enemies ſhall periſh: but they that*

[h] *See* Rev. chap. 17, and 18.

love

love him ſhall be as the ſun when he goes forth in his might.

III. The humble aſcription that is made to God of the victory already obtain'd, or whatſoever like advantages might be hereafter expected. For by the addreſs that is made to God to execute the like vengeance on all the reſt of his enemies, 'tis intimated that the overthrow of theſe Canaanites was owing to his divine hand; *So let all thy enemies periſh, O Lord.*

And laſtly, I ſhall attempt to make ſome improvement of the whole, with reference to the occaſion of our ſolemn thankſgiving this day.

Firſt then, We are to take notice of the grateful reflection made by the pious Deborah and Barak, and the reſt of the thankful Iſraelites, on the great victory God had given them over their enemies; which was ſo great, that they mention it as a model and pattern by which they deſire and hope he would proceed againſt all his enemies, or, which is the ſame thing, the enemies of his church in ages to come.

If we read this and the foregoing chapter, we ſhall find the Iſraelites were in a miſerable condition. Jabin king of Canaan had actually enſlaved this free people. They who had lived under the benign influence of a theocracy, being ſubject to no other king than

than God himſelf, were forced to yield their necks to the uneaſy yoke of a heathen tyrant, who *mightily oppreſſed them*, and that for *twenty years* together [i]; for *their rock had ſold them* [k], as Moſes had long ſince predicted. *They did evil in the ſight of the Lord —— and the Lord ſold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan* [l]; i. e. God by his providence delivered them into the hands of this tyrant, and permitted him to treat them as ſlaves who are ſold for money. The great oppreſſion they groaned under is elegantly deſcribed in this ſong of Deborah: *In the days of Shamgar the ſon of Anath, in the days of Jael the high-ways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked thro' by-ways. The inhabitants of the villages ceaſed in Iſrael, until I Deborah aroſe, till I aroſe a mother in Iſrael. They choſe new gods, then was war in the gates: was there a ſhield or ſpear ſeen among forty thouſand in Iſrael* [m]? —— *They that are delivered from the noiſe of archers in the places of drawing water, there ſhall they rehearſe the righteous acts of the Lord* [n]. It ſeems they were continually liable to the excurſions and inſults of the Canaanites, who ravag'd and ſpoil'd their poſſeſſions; ſo that they could not ſtep abroad without running the riſk of falling into their cruel hands. War, and the fatal train of miſeries that attended

[i] Chap. 4. ver. 3.
[k] Deut. 32. 30.
[l] Judges 4. 1, 2.
[m] Ver. 6, 7, 8.
[n] Ver. 11.

the conqueſts their enemies had made, had depopulated the villages of that fertile country, had ſtopp'd the courſe of their commerce, had render'd their publick roads deſolate, and carry'd terror into the very gates of their fortified places. Multitudes of Iſraelites were intirely diſarm'd; and that warlike people, whoſe diſtant fame when they came out of Egypt *made the inhabitants of Paleſtine tremble* [o], were now become ſo weak and defenſeleſs, that ſcarce a ſword or ſhield was to be found among 40000 of them. Nor could they go out to draw water for themſelves or cattle without the peril of their lives, being conſtantly infeſted with the tumultuous noiſe of archers that lay in wait to oppoſe them.

This miſery was the leſs tolerable to all who had any ſenſe of religion and honour, in that they were abandoned to the fury of a heathen prince of one of thoſe nations that had been conquered by their anceſtors, and made to ſerve under tribute [p]; and whom, by a ſupine negligence, added to the reſt of their ſins and follies, they had ſuffered to grow to this exorbitant power: ſo that the people they had formerly ſubdued, were now become *ſnares and traps* to them, *ſcourges in their ſides, and thorns in their eyes* [q], as Joſhua had foretold them. The Canaanites who formerly ſerved them, were now become their maſters; they who were once tributary

[o] Exod. 15. 14.
[p] Joſh. 17. 13.
[q] Joſh. 23. 13.

to

to them, were now their inſolent governors. The worſhippers of idols trampled on the people, who were introduced into this country by the *mighty hand and out-ſtretched arm* of the *living God*; who made way for them by a long train of miraculous ſucceſſes, ſubduing all that oppoſed them *by his ſword and by his bow.*

Under theſe unhappy circumſtances, there was, humanly ſpeaking, no appearance of regaining their liberty: for what could be expected from a people whoſe ſpirits had been long enfeebled and dejected by a tedious ſtate of ſervitude, and who were moreover naked and defenſeleſs, againſt a powerful monarch, who had a very numerous army and nine hundred chariots of iron in the field? An army that had been ſo fleſh'd with repeated victories, and ſo us'd to ſucceſs, that the mother of Siſera their general, as well as the reſt of the ladies of king Jabin's court, could by no means entertain a thought that they had fail'd in their preſent expedition, while yet they could not but wonder at their unuſual ſtay in the field. They knew not how to imagine, that the Iſraelites could ever have aſſembled troops enough to make head againſt them, or could have been furniſhed with arms and inſpired with courage ſufficient to defeat an army, ſo great and ſo well appointed as that under the command of Siſera; and are therefore well deſcribed in this excellent ſong to have expreſſed themſelves

ſelves after the following manner: *The mother of Siſera looked out at a window, and cried thro' the lattice, Why is his chariot ſo long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots? Her wiſe ladies anſwered her, yea ſhe returned anſwer to herſelf; Have they not ſped? have they not divided the prey? to every man a damſel or two; to Siſera a prey of divers colours of needle-work on both ſides, meet for the necks of them that take the ſpoil*[r]?

The troops of Jabin were the more formidable, in that they appear to have been joined by ſome other princes of Canaan. *The kings came and fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo*[s]. Theſe kings were confederate with Jabin, and perhaps tributary to him: for he reigned in Hazor[s], which *was the head of many kingdoms*[t]; and a prince of the ſame name was king of Hazor, and aſſembled divers other princes together to oppoſe Joſhua when he invaded Canaan, and received an overthrow as fatal by his hand, as this monarch, with whom our text is concerned, did from the hands of Deborah and Barak.

Nay, ſome of the tribes of Iſrael, whether thro' deſpair of ever recovering their antient liberty, or a ſervile fear of aggravating their bondage, or a ſtupid neglect of their own true intereſt, or a ſpirit of faction, and unreaſonable diſaffection to the good government

[r] Ver. 28, 29, 30.
[s] Ver. 19.
[s] Chap. 4. 2.
[t] Joſh. 11. 10.

and

and wiſe conduct of Deborah, declined the neceſſary ſervice of that memorable day, and gave the propheteſs juſt reaſon in the midſt of her triumph to upbraid them with the loſs of ſo glorious an occaſion of ſignalizing their valour, and of teſtifying their affection to their country.—— *For the diviſions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart. Why abodeſt thou among the ſheep-folds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the diviſions of Reuben there were great ſearchings of heart. Gilead abode beyond Jordan, and why did Dan remain in ſhips? Aſher continued on the ſea-ſhore, and abode in his breaches* [v].

And that which added a very great weight to all the other diſcouragements under which this miſerable people laboured, was the greatneſs of their ſin, in having abandoned the ſervice of the true God. They cried to him indeed when they were in diſtreſs, but their frequent revolts ſhew that their prayers and tears often proceeded rather from the ſenſe of their ſufferings, than that of their ſins. Was it likely that that God who had been ſo often provoked by them and their fathers, who returned as conſtantly to their former tranſgreſſions as he repeated his wonted favours, would now again deliver them? Might they not juſtly expect that he would now be as deaf to their prayers, as they had before been to his commands? Yet ſo gracious and indulgent was the great God to this perverſe

[v] Ver. 15, 16, 17.

and

and ungrateful people who had dealt treacherouſly with him, by violating his covenant and forſaking his worſhip, that when they ſeemed in the leaſt ſenſible of their iniquity and folly, he heard their ſupplication, and wrought deliverance for them. And tho it appears not from the context that there was ſo great and general a reformation among them, as might have been expected, both from the ſacred authority and ſhining example of that great propheteſs, who then judged the tribes of Iſrael; yet God was pleaſed to crown her government with a glorious victory, as a reward to her extraordinary zeal, and a return to the fervent prayers of thoſe pious Iſraelites, who *ſigh'd for the abominations that had been committed*, and uſed their utmoſt endeavours to reform the manners of the people.

A victory to a nation under ſo great oppreſſion, and living in fear of being loaded with yet heavier chains, was a kind of reſurrection. The revival of the glorious cauſe of their religion and liberty, that ſeemed to be expiring together, furniſhed an occaſion of joy and thankſgiving fit to be celebrated by the tongue and pen of that propheteſs, who had, under God, the chief hand in the work, and the principal ſhare in the honour of that happy day, which at once brought deſtruction on the forces of Jabin, and returned liberty and peace to the tribes of Iſrael.

A victory very glorious to Deborah and Barak, in that at the head of ten thouſand Iſraelites they gave an intire defeat to an army much ſuperior in number. *And Deborah ſaid to Barak, Up, for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Siſera into thy hand: Is not the Lord gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thouſand men after him; and the Lord diſcomfited Siſera, and all his chariots, and all his hoſt, with the edge of the ſword before Barak: ſo that Siſera lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet. But Barak purſued after the chariots and after the hoſt to Haroſheth of the Gentiles: and all the hoſt of Siſera fell on the edge of the ſword, and there was not a man left* [u].

All things concurred to give the Canaanites a mortal blow. *They fought from heaven*, ſays the propheteſs, *the ſtars in their courſes fought againſt Siſera* [w]. Some interpreters think thunder and lightning, with great ſhowers of rain or hail, which God is ſaid *to reſerve againſt the time of trouble, againſt the day of battle and war* [x], were ſent from heaven to the aſſiſtance of the Iſraelites. Others ſuppoſe that expreſſion denotes that the ſtars contributed to compleat the victory, in furniſhing light to the troops of Iſrael to purſue the routed enemy. 'Tis the opinion of others, that it relates to the miniſtry of angels, who

[u] Chap. 4. 14, 15, 16.
[w] Chap. 5. 20.
[x] Job 38. 22, 23, &c.

are

are called ſtars in the book of Job [y], and have been often employed to execute the divine juſtice on the enemies of the church. And others imagine it to be a poetical alluſion, repreſenting the higher ground from which the Iſraelites fought, the good order and diſcipline obſerved among them, and the courage and reſolution with which they maintained their ground and beat the enemy from his: ſo that they ſeemed to fight from heaven, and appeared regular in all their motions, like the ſtars in their courſe.

Thoſe of the enemy who were not overtaken by the ſword were driven into the river Kiſhon; and their horſe were as intirely broken and deſtroyed as their foot, as appears by Deborah's ſong: *The river Kiſhon ſwept them away, that antient river the river Kiſhon. O my ſoul, thou haſt trodden down ſtrength. Then were the horſe-hoofs broken by means of the prancings, the prancings of their mighty ones* [z].

This action was the more memorable, in that it was firſt concerted and afterwards carried on by the prudent management and good conduct of a woman. It was Deborah who ſent Barak on this glorious expedition [a], and rouzed the courage of the people to make a brave attempt to ſhake off the ſervile yoke that had ſo long gall'd them, to vindicate their antient rights, and recover their

[y] Job 28. 7.
[z] Judges 5. 21, 22.
[a] *See* chap. 4.

loſt honour. And as Siſera, the general of king Jabin's troops, inglorioufly fled from the ſword of one woman, the divine providence ſo ordered it that he ſhould fall into the hands of another; and inſtead of dying in the bed of honour, he fell by no other weapon than a nail driven thro' his temples with a hammer.

So vain was the confident expectation of victory in Siſera's mother, and the other court-ladies who flatter'd her empty hopes, when the great God thought fit to confound their pride and ſtain their glory, to make the world know that *there is no king ſaved by the multitude of a hoſt: a mighty man is not delivered by much ſtrength. A horſe is a vain thing for ſafety; neither ſhall he deliver any by his great ſtrength.* But that, *The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy* [b].

To conclude this head: The conſequence of this wonderful victory was not only the re-eſtabliſhment of the liberty of the Iſraelites, but the diſſipation of all their fears; the enemy being overthrown beyond a poſſibility of rallying again. And as a peace of forty years enſued upon it, ſo at the expiration of that time, when their ſins provoked God again to ſend them a ſcourge, it was by another hand that he chaſtiſed them [c]. So that this battel at the river Kiſhon proved a deciſive ſtroke in favour of Iſrael; and happy

[b] Pſal. 33. 16, 17, 18. | [c] Chap. 6. 1, 2.

had that people been, if they had conſtantly adhered to the ſervice of their God, who ſo often made their enemies fly and fall before them.

Having given ſome account of the victory to which our text refers, we are to conſider,

II. The hopeful proſpect that is hence taken of the future victories to be expected by the church on like occaſions; *So let all thy enemies periſh, O Lord:* q. d. "However "numerous and powerful thoſe armies are "that are employed to oppreſs and perſecute "thy people; how much ſoever thoſe who "employ them glory in their own ſtrength "and policy, and aſſure themſelves of new "conqueſts and repeated triumphs; ſcatter "their numbers, break their arm of fleſh, "confound their counſels, blaſt their de-"ſigns, and diſappoint their hopes."

If here ariſe a doubt in the mind of any perſon, whether ſuch a prayer as this, tho uſed by the Iſraelitiſh church, is ſuitable to the mild and forgiving temper of the evangelick adminiſtration, by which we are taught to *love our enemies*, to *bleſs them that curſe us*, to *do good to them that hate us*, and to *pray for thoſe who deſpitefully uſe us and perſecute us* [d]; I deſire it may be conſidered, that,

As the words of our text were dictated by the holy Spirit, who guided the propheteſs

[d] Mat. 5. 44.

in the compoſition of her ſong of praiſe; they can't be inconſiſtent with the words of our Saviour, who had the tongue of the learned given him by the ſame Spirit. Some indeed have imagined, that under the diſpenſation of the old teſtament a much greater liberty was taken by holy men to invoke the divine vengeance againſt their enemies, than is allowed under the new; the chriſtian religion being peculiarly eminent for that meekneſs and charity, wherewith it inſpires its votaries. But ſince theſe are moral virtues, by whatever new motives the doctrine of the goſpel recommends the practice of them, the nature of them was ever the ſame; and as they are to be referred to the ſecond table of the moral law, they neceſſarily bound the conſciences of thoſe who lived under the old teſtament, as well as of thoſe who live under the new. Nor is it to be ſuppoſed that the Spirit of God, who inſpired ſo many prayers againſt the enemies of the church, as are to be found in the book of Pſalms, and other parts of the divine writings, would have indulged in the prophets an uncharitable and malicious frame of mind, which is utterly inconſiſtent with the precepts of the moral law.

'Tis true, we ought never to pray for the eternal deſtruction of thoſe who hate us, but on the contrary, that they may be ſaved from the wrath to come. And if we find in the holy ſcripture ſome imprecations that ſeem

to

to aim at the everlaſting ruin of the perſons againſt whom they are uttered, as thoſe againſt Judas, and ſome other enemies of God and his church, in the 69th Pſalm and elſewhere; theſe are rather to be conſidered as predictions of their everlaſting miſery, than prayers that they might be for ever miſerable: and none ought to uſe the like againſt any, till they make it appear that the ſpirit of prophecy has plainly mark'd them out, and devoted them to perdition.

Nor ought we abſolutely to deſire and pray for the temporal ruin of the enemies of the church in general, or thoſe of the nation in which we dwell, but only conditionally, if the rules of the divine law, and proviſion for the common ſafety, make it neceſſary. We are even to deſire their preſervation, if it may be conſiſtent with juſtice and the publick good: yet this hinders not but we may pray, that if they perſiſt in their injuſtice and malignity, and are to be reduced by no milder method, they may rather fall into that ruin they have prepared for others, than proſper in their unjuſt and cruel deſigns againſt the innocent.

If a controverſy between different princes and ſtates ariſe to that height that it can't be decided but by force, and a people muſt either ſacrifice all that's dear to them to the boundleſs ambition of a tyrant, or betake themſelves to arms to aſſert their rights, and ſeek to preſerve themſelves by the ſlaughter

of their enemies; reaſon, and the law of nature, the common principle of ſelf-preſervation, and the law of nations, the love of juſtice, and the ſafety of the innocent, all juſtify thoſe prayers which invoke the exertion of the arm of God to vindicate ſo good a cauſe, by the preſervation of the righteous, and overthrow of the wicked. And the holy ſcripture gives us innumerable inſtances of petitions of this kind, and of the approbation they have received from heaven, by the ſignal victories that have been given in anſwer to them.

For there is a very great difference between perſonal controverſies and thoſe of large communities or whole nations. It becomes a private man to paſs by offences, to forgive injuries, to pray for his enemies, and render them good offices for their ill treatment of him; becauſe this may not only conſiſt with, but very much conduce to his own ſafety, honour and advantage, and the welfare of the community wherein he lives: and when theſe ſuffer or are in danger, he may appeal to the magiſtrate who is God's vicegerent, and ſeek the deciſion of the quarrel at the hand of publick juſtice. But when nations contend, and have no judge on earth to whom they can agree to refer their cauſe, they, by taking up arms, make an appeal to God the ſovereign judge of the univerſe, and refer their quarrel to the deciſion of his providence. And when the ruin of one or the other army

muſt

muſt determine the controverſy, nothing can be more evident, than that thoſe who are engaged in a righteous cauſe may pray for their own ſucceſs; which implies the defeat of their enemies, becauſe this is now become neceſſary to their own preſervation.

I might add, that the enemies of the church in the text are called the enemies of God, theſe being convertible terms; and conſequently thoſe who love God's honour and intereſt, may very ſafely pray that his enemies may be diſappointed and ſubdued.

In ſhort, the practice of the church of God in all ages furniſhes precedents for ſuch prayers; the promiſes in the prophetick writings both of the old and new teſtament give encouragement to them; and whatſoever might be ſaid in vindication of a juſt war, may be fairly alledged to juſtify them. For when war becomes a lawful undertaking, we may warrantably pray for ſucceſs in it; that is, for the overthrow of our enemies; unleſs any one will maintain, that it is unwarrantable to pray for ſucceſs in a lawful undertaking.

But I proceed to the other part of Deborah's prayer in the text. Having prayed againſt the enemies of God and of his church, ſhe adds a petition for the proſperity of the righteous: *But let them that love him be as the ſun when he goes forth in his might.*

They may well be ſaid to love God, who love his honour, his truth and cauſe; who love the peace and proſperity of his church, and who expoſe themſelves to labour and fatigue, to difficulties and dangers for her ſake. 'Tis not unlikely that this character was primarily deſigned for the officers and troops of Iſrael, who had ſo bravely conquered the formidable army of the Canaanites; and whom the propheteſs mentions with ſo much honour in other parts of her ſong. *My heart*, ſays ſhe, *is towards the governors of Iſrael, that offered themſelves willingly among the people: bleſs ye the Lord* [e]. *Out of Ephraim was there a root of them againſt Amalek*; *after thee Benjamin among thy people: out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer* [f]. *Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field* [g]. But this requeſt may be commodiouſly extended farther, and referred to them who ſhould love God in all ſucceeding ages; and may be thus paraphraſed: "Let all thoſe generous gover-
"nors, all thoſe brave officers and troops of
"volunteers who have ſhared in the glory
"of this expedition, and all thoſe who ſhall
"have the like zeal for God, and the ſame
"love to the intereſt of his church in future
"times, proſper in their honourable attempts

[e] Judges 5. 9.
[f] Ver. 14.
[g] Ver. 18.

"for

" for the common benefit: let them ariſe " like the ſun out of their obſcurity, and " ſtill increaſe in ſtrength and honour. " And as that glorious luminary chaſes away " all the horror and darkneſs of the night, " and diſſipates the clouds and miſts that " ſurround him in the morning, ſo let them " ſpeedily and intirely ſcatter all the force of " their enemies. As the ſun comes like a " *bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoices* " *as a ſtrong man to run a race: his going* " *forth is from the end of the heaven, and his* " *circuit unto the ends of it; and there is no-* " *thing hid from the heat thereof* [h]: let their " generous actions in like manner ſpread their " fame thro' the univerſe; let their honour " be as extenſive as their influence; let every " part of the world, that feels the benefit of " the great things they have performed, have " an agreeable view of the glory they have " acquired."

And I may add, what was intimated before, that theſe words may be commodiouſly interpreted as a prophecy of the happy ſtate of the church in the latter days, with the promiſes whereof the ſcripture abounds, and often deſcribes it with the like metaphorical expreſſions. In this view the prophet Iſaiah addreſſes himſelf to the church in theſe terms: *Ariſe, ſhine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is riſen upon thee* [i]. And as ſhe is deſcribed in the ſong of Solomon to be *fair*

[h] Pſal. 19. 5. [i] Iſa. 60. 1.

as

as the moon, clear as the ſun, and terrible as an army with banners [k]; ſo ſhe was repreſented to the apoſtle John as *a woman clothed with the ſun, and the moon under her feet* [l], &c. to denote her beauty, and the glory with which ſhe ſhould be adorn'd.

But I proceed to the third thing obſerved in the text, *viz.*

III. The humble aſcription that is made to the Almighty of the victory obtain'd, as well as a dependance on the ſame mercy and power for the like advantages to be hereafter expected; expreſs'd in this prophetick petition, *So let all thy enemies periſh, O Lord,* &c.

While the church prays that all God's enemies may periſh like the forces of Jabin, ſhe owns that the deciſion of battles belongs to the Lord of hoſts, and that the victory obtained over the Canaanites, was owing to the God of Iſrael. This truth is often acknowledged in the divine writings, and is often very elegantly expreſſed by the pſalmiſt: *For who is God,* ſays he, *ſave the Lord; or who is a rock, ſave our God? It is God that girds me with ſtrength, and makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like hinds feet, and ſets me upon my high places. He teaches my hands to war, ſo that a bow of ſteel is broken by my arms. Thou haſt alſo given me the ſhield of thy ſalvation, and thy right hand has holden me up, and thy gentleneſs has made me*

[k] Cant. 6. 10. | [l] Rev. 12. 1.

great.

great. Thou haſt enlarged my ſteps under me, that my feet did not ſlip. I have purſued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were conſumed. I have wounded them that they were not able to riſe; they are fallen under my feet. For thou haſt girded me with ſtrength unto battle: thou haſt ſubdued under me thoſe that roſe up againſt me: Thou haſt alſo given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might deſtroy them that hate me [m], &c. *We will rejoice in thy ſalvation, and in the name of our God we will ſet up our banners: the Lord fulfil all thy petitions. Now know I that the Lord ſaveth his anointed: he will hear him from his holy heaven with the ſaving ſtrength of his right hand* [n]. *In Judah is God known; his name is great in Iſrael. In Salem alſo is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Sion. There brake he the arrows of the bow, the ſhield, and the ſword, and the battle. Selah* [o]. *The ſtout-hearted are ſpoiled, they have ſlept their ſleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horſe are caſt into a dead ſleep. Thou, even thou art to be feared; and who may ſtand in thy ſight, when once thou art angry* [p]? &c.

The name of *Lord of hoſts*, ſo often uſed in ſcripture, ſignifies not only that all the hoſt of heaven, all the legions of angels are under the divine government; but alſo that all the

[m] Pſal. 18. 31—40.
[n] Pſal. 20. 5, 6.
[o] Pſal. 76. 1, 2, 3.
[p] Ver. 5, 6, 7.

armies

armies of men are at the diſpoſal of God, and over-rul'd to ſubſerve his deſigns and accompliſh his pleaſure.

He gives princes, ſtateſmen, and generals, preſence of mind, or confounds their thoughts; he directs them to take right methods, or infatuates them; he renders their projects proſperous, or diſconcerts and breaks their meaſures; he gives courage to their armies, or diſpirits them: he ſometimes augments the reſolution and valour of thoſe whom he deſigns to render victorious; ſo that on that account they vaſtly ſurpaſs their enemies, and even exceed themſelves, and are made to accompliſh that which on other occaſions themſelves would think imprudent to attempt. Thus, to uſe the prophet's phraſe, *The feeble become like David, and the houſe of David like the angel of the Lord* [q]. *With him is ſtrength and wiſdom: the deceived and the deceiver are his. He leadeth away counſellors ſpoiled, and maketh the judges fools. He looſeth the bonds of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle. He leadeth princes away ſpoiled, and overthroweth the mighty. He removeth away the ſpeech of the truſty, and taketh away the underſtanding of the aged. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the ſtrength of the mighty. He diſcovereth deep things out of darkneſs, and bringeth out to light the ſhadow of death. He increaſeth the nations, and deſtroyeth them: he enlargeth the*

[q] Zech. 12. 8.

nations,

nations, and ſtraitneth them again. He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and cauſeth them to wander in a wilderneſs where there is no way. They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to ſtagger like a drunken man [r].

Every one who is converſant in the holy ſcriptures, knows that nothing has been more conſtantly attributed to God, than the advantages his people have obtained over their enemies; and that many pſalms of praiſe have beeen compoſed on ſuch occaſions. *In his name* they were wont to *ſet up their banners*, and to his arm they uſed to aſcribe all their victories.

Nor does this hinder the obligation all good men are under, of making a grateful acknowledgment to the perſons whom the providence of God has employed for their defence or deliverance. As God himſelf has declared that *he will honour thoſe who honour him* [f]; ſo he requires us to give *honour to whom honour is due* [s]. Common juſtice and gratitude engage us to be thankful to our benefactors; and this obligation increaſes in proportion to the extent and value of the benefits we receive by their means, and to the difficulties and perils to which they have generouſly expoſed themſelves in procuring them: of which former ages were ſo ſenſible, that many nations have been much

[r] Job 12. 16——25.
[f] 1 Sam. 2. 30.
[s] Rom. 13. 7.

more

more prone to exceed due bounds in the honours they have done their heroes, both while living and when dead, than to be deficient therein. Tho, I confeſs, we live in an age and nation wherein ſome have not ſcrupled to practiſe the reverſe of this, and have been ſo unjuſt to the name of a prince, to whom, under God, they owe the reſtoration of their civil, and preſervation of their religious liberties, as to refuſe that honour to his memory, which his leſs partial enemies abroad think reaſonable to allow him.

The ſong of Deborah gives the principal glory of the victory it celebrates to the great God, to whom *ſalvation and victory* belong; and at the ſame time forgets not to give juſt applauſe to the officers and troops that acquired it under the divine conduct. *Praiſe ye the Lord*, ſays ſhe, *for the avenging of Iſrael, when the people willingly offered themſelves: Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even I will ſing to the Lord, I will ſing praiſe to the Lord God of Iſrael* [t]. *My heart is toward the governors of Iſrael, that offered themſelves willingly among the people. Bleſs ye the Lord* [u]. *Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a ſong: ariſe, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou ſon of Abinoam. Then he made him that remaineth, have dominion over the nobles among the*

[t] Judges 5. 2, 3.

[u] Ver. 9.

people:

people: the Lord made me have dominion over the mighty [v].

And nothing can be more certainly concluded, than that it is the duty of thoſe to whom God has given victory over cruel enemies, to depend for the future on the ſame divine arm that has already made them conquerors; and *that they that know his name ſhould put their truſt in him,* ſeeing *he has not forſaken them that ſeek him* [w].

But 'tis time we ſhould come to the improvement of what has been ſaid, with a particular reference to the ſolemn occaſion of our aſſembling this day.

It becomes us to imitate the zeal of Deborah and Barak, and the joyful tribes of Iſrael, in looking back on the late victory it has pleaſed God to give her majeſty's troops, and thoſe of her allies, over the arms of France; to excite us to the duty of praiſe and thankſgiving, to which we have had ſo loud a call by the providence of God, as well as by her majeſty's pious proclamation.

We may alſo hence take occaſion with the ſame Iſraelites to look forward with hope, and to pray for, I had almoſt ſaid preſage, the like glorious acts of providence in favour of the righteous cauſe in which this nation, with ſome other ſtates, is engaged againſt the moſt dangerous tyrant and greateſt perſecutor of the age; and to give the Almighty the

[v] Ver. 12, 13. [w] Pſal. 9. 10.

glory

glory due to his name, by confiding in his mercy and power for future victories, ſince our hope is encouraged by one ſo eminent as that which we now joyfully commemorate: the circumſtances of which were not altogether unlike that which is celebrated in the ſong of triumph which our text concludes.

'Tis true, we have not been enſlaved to France, we have not felt what it is to be oppreſſed, as the Iſraelites were under the yoke of Jabin. We were in the poſſeſſion of our liberty and religion, when God was pleaſed to give us the late victory. His providence has given us a commodious ſituation in the midſt of the ſeas; which has been a mean to preſerve us even from many of the calamities of war, that are unavoidable to our neighbours and allies on the continent. But every conſidering man will acknowledge, that the danger that both formerly and of late has threatned us, of being inſulted by that great oppreſſor, who pretends to give laws and kings to ſo many nations, has not been contemptible. That he has been many years endeavouring to graſp all the territories of Europe, and ſubjugate them to his arbitrary power, has appeared by the management of his councils, and the operations of his forces: and there are but too many ſad inſtances of his ſucceſs in ſome foreign countries, into which he has carried fire and ſword, and by thoſe inſtruments of cruelty eſtabliſhed his deſpotick government. The yoke has been

no

no leſs heavy which he has impoſed on multitudes of his own ſubjects. I preſume you are not ignorant with what unparallel'd barbarity he has perſecuted the proteſtants in France, as well as thoſe in Piedmont and the principality of Orange: what great numbers have ſuffered death by variety of exquiſite torments! how many have been condemned to the ſlavery of the gallies, or that of the American plantations! and how many have been expoſed to the difficulties of flight, and the poverty and hardſhip attending a ſtate of exile in foreign countries!

Prudence, and the care of our own welfare, deeply intereſt us in all the miſeries that befal our allies; and humanity teaches us to pity all that are oppreſſed. But we owe the members of our Saviour's myſtical body a ſympathy ſo tender, as to make us reſent their ſorrows and ſufferings as our own: and therefore what they have felt as well as what we have feared, their afflictions as well as our own dangers, ſhew us what cauſe we have to bleſs God for the late mortification the common enemy has received.

The many crying ſins of this nation, and the great aggravation of its guilt in ſo long refuſing to be reformed, notwithſtanding all the pious and charitable attempts that have been made to that purpoſe by perſons of all ranks and degrees among us; the abuſe of ſo many days of ſolemn humiliation, wherein too many have *drawn nigh to God* only *with*

their mouths, and honoured him with their lips, while *their hearts have been far from him*, increaſed the fears of many good men, and made their *hearts tremble*, like Eli's, *for the ark of God*; leſt our rock ſhould ſell us into the hands of our enemies as a people incorrigible by all indulgent methods, and make us ſerve a people that were not able to ſtand before our anceſtors, nor had been ſo formidable in this age, if the weakneſs and treachery of thoſe who ſhould have provided for the common ſafety in ſome former reigns, had not favoured their ambitious deſigns, by conniving at their unreaſonable quarrels with their neighbours, by tamely looking on their many unjuſt incroachments, and by contributing to the vaſt increaſe of their naval force.

And notwithſtanding the frequent checks the French king received by the prudent counſels, indefatigable induſtry, and victorious arms of the late king William of glorious memory; yet the reſpite he obtained by the peace he found himſelf obliged to ſeek at the hand of this prince, was improved by him in recruiting his ſtrength, and in making preparation for the expected death of the late king of Spain, upon whoſe exit he did not want a pretence to get Spain itſelf, and the greateſt part of the dominions belonging to that monarchy, immediately under his power. Divers places in the Low-Countries that had been regained from him

and

and defended againſt him in the former war, at the expence of ſo much blood and treaſure, fell at once into his hands; and the immenſe riches of the Weſt-Indian mines became an eaſy prey to him.

While all Europe was in a conſternation, and trembled at the event of this great revolution, and divers princes and ſtates found themſelves under a neceſſity to arm againſt the miſchiefs that deeply affected ſome of them, and threatned the reſt; France employed her intereſt and artifice with ſo much ſucceſs, as to engage ſeveral of them to eſpouſe her quarrel, and to amuſe others into a neutrality, notwithſtanding the evidence of the common danger.

With theſe advantages the French king began the preſent war, and before the late defeat of his troops near Hochſtet, had made very great advances in Germany by the aſſiſtance of the elector of Bavaria: a prince, who, after the example of his brother the elector of Cologne, has thought fit to ſacrifice his own honour and authority, as well as the blood of his ſubjects and peace of his country, to the humour of a tyrant, and to have the ſatisfaction of lending his aſſiſtance to enſlave Europe, for whoſe liberty he formerly appeared in the field; as if he now thought it more eligible to be a vaſſal of France than a ſovereign prince, and more honourable to draw his ſword againſt the common liberty than in the defence of it.

The conſternation, weakneſs, and diviſions of the empire, the ſucceſs of the French in obliging the imperialiſts to abandon Italy, the difficulties under which the duke of Savoy laboured, the unaccountable confuſions of Poland, and the doubtful ſituation of the affairs of Portugal, together with the untoward factions and diſcontents that fermented the Scotiſh nation, as well as the diſaffection of too many in this kingdom, who, by their frowardneſs and uneaſineſs under the preſent government, make it appear that they wiſh not ſo well to the proteſtant intereſt as they ought to do; all theſe things gave us but a melancholy proſpect of affairs before the late battle.

The forces of the enemy were ſuperior in number to thoſe of the allies: they were the flower and pride of the French troops, that had all the advantages of diſcipline and experience; many of them were veteranes, led on by a more than common number of good officers, long inured to the hardſhips, and well acquainted with the ſtratagems of war, under the conduct of a general of a growing reputation. They had the advantage of the ground, and were big with the hope of a compleat victory, and of the large ſpoil and new honours that would attend it.

If, at this critical juncture, God had thought fit *to deal with us according to our ſins, and to reward us after our iniquities*, what a diſmal ſcene might we now have had in

in view! If victory had been on our enemies ſide, and given them an opportunity of cutting off the retreat of our troops, and of ſurrounding them in a place ſo very diſtant from their native country, the ſlaughter of them might have been as great; and their overthrow as fatal as that of the French has proved. Our ſorrow and fear might have been equal to our preſent joy and hope. We might have been this day the ſcorn and triumph of thoſe who hate us; and inſtead of wearing the *garments of praiſe*, might have been clothed with the *ſpirit of heavineſs*. But God has ſpoken to us by his providence, as he did formerly to the Jews by his prophets: *For my name's ſake will I defer mine anger, and for my praiſe will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off—— For my own ſake, even for my own ſake will I do it; for how ſhould my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory to another* [x].

The French were very confident of ſucceſs; but to their confidence the confederate army oppoſed their ſolemn prayers, to engage the Almighty on their ſide, and ſeem to have encountered their enemies with a courage like that with which king Hezekiah inſpired the Jewiſh captains, againſt the powerful army of the king of Aſſyria, when he ſaid, *Be ſtrong and courageous, be not afraid nor diſmayed for the king of Aſſyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him. With him*

[x] Iſa. 48. 9, 11.

is an arm of fleſh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles [y]. And we may now ſay, *The Lord has made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations* [z]; and has given us a victory that has no parallel in the preſent age, and all things conſidered, there are few examples in hiſtory which can equal it, excepting thoſe miraculous inſtances among the Iſraelites in the time of the judges. Our enemies have not only been conquered, but cut off in prodigious numbers; many ſquadrons which eſcaped the edge of the ſword, were precipitated into the Danube, and drowned therein, as the Canaanites were in the river Kiſhon, and the Egyptians before in the Red-Sea, and a great number of battalions made priſoners of war: ſo that a numerous and well-diſciplin'd army was not only routed, but in a manner totally ruin'd.

Some conſiderable victories have been obtained without any great ſlaughter of men; when many have been ſlain, the body of the army has been often ſaved by a prudent retreat; when they have been put to a diſorderly flight, great numbers have commonly eſcaped, and ſoon made a formidable appearance again. But on this occaſion all things concurred to the almoſt intire deſtruction of the French troops, which is a very ſurpriſing event, in an age and in an army wherein the art of war has been ſo

[y] 2 Chron. 32. 7, 8. | [z] Iſa. 52. 10.

much refined, and advanced to ſo high a perfection. In former ages men generally fought with abundantly more courage than skill, and ſeemed more careful to employ what art they had in deſtroying their enemies than in preſerving themſelves; and conſequently the ſlaughter on both ſides was uſually great. But modern armies are no leſs skilful in the defenſive than in the offenſive part of war, and are not wont to engage, without firſt taking all neceſſary precautions to ſecure to themſelves a good retreat, in caſe they ſhould fail of ſucceſs: and the French, of all others, have been remarked for their prudence and care on this account. But whether a dependance on the number, experience, and courage of their troops, and a confident expectation of coming off conquerors, removed all apprehenſion of danger from the minds of their generals, or whatſoever elſe was the cauſe of their infatuation, they ſo ordered the matter, that when their army was broken, a great part of it was ſo incloſed by the confederate forces, that it was impoſſible for them to eſcape; and many others found no other way of retreat than that of throwing themſelves into the Danube, leaving their camp and the ſpoils of it to their conquerors.

And that which ought to endear to us the memory of this action, and to give a peculiar accent to our thankſgiving, is, that the forces of the proteſtant princes and ſtates,

and more eſpecially the Engliſh troops, had the far greateſt ſhare in it, and conſequently of the honour that attends it.

The deſtruction of ſo many of the French king's braveſt troops, which he had ſo often reviewed with pleaſure, as the hopeful inſtruments of his cruel ambition, and whoſe former ſucceſſes had been celebrated by the wit and eloquence of ſo many flattering tongues and pens, muſt needs give a ſtrange uneaſineſs to the mind of that haughty monarch; while we adore the divine providence that has abaſed the glory of his high looks, broken the arm of fleſh on which he leaned, and ſwept away many of thoſe troops from the face of the earth, which he had employed to extirpate the proteſtant religion out of France.

The ſignal preſervation of the Engliſh general, who was expoſed to imminent danger in this battle, and the taking of the French general priſoner, with divers other general officers, beſides thoſe who fell by the ſword, all add to the ſplendor of that memorable day; which would have been leſs bright and joyful, if mareſchal Tallard had made his eſcape, and the duke of Marlborough had been ſlain.

As the victory itſelf was very great, ſo are the conſequences of it likely to be, ſome of which already begin to appear. What immediate relief has it given to Germany? what life to the common cauſe of Europe? what

what ſtrength to the confederacy? what vigor to the ſpirits of the people in this and divers foreign nations? And we may reaſonably hope for yet greater things, if the great God will continue to *go out with our armies:* and not only this age, but ages to come will reap the advantage, as well as keep up the memory of this never-to-be-forgotten victory. For,

2. We may hence take encouragement after the example of the Iſraelites in our text, to hope and pray for the like eminent diſplays of the divine juſtice and mercy hereafter. *So let all thy enemies periſh, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the ſun when he goes forth in his might.* What God has already wrought for his church, ſeems a hopeful earneſt and pledge of yet greater things which he deſigns in her favour: and as we have had occaſion for many days of humiliation and prayer, let us hope for as many ſeaſons of joy and thankſgiving. Let us pray that thoſe who attempt to baniſh liberty, peace, and the true religion from the earth, may ſee their pernicious deſigns prove abortive; and that the forces they unjuſtly employ to execute ſuch wicked purpoſes, may become as *duſt to the ſwords, and as driven ſtubble to the bows*[a] of thoſe who favour the cauſe of truth and juſtice: that thoſe princes, who neither fear God nor regard man, but break all civil and ſacred

[a] Iſa. 41. 2.

bonds

bonds aſunder at their pleaſure, that will be governed by no principles either of honour or conſcience, but perfidiouſly violate the moſt ſolemn treaties and oaths to gratify their inſatiable deſire of dominion, may never be able to compaſs their deſigns, but that the righteous judgment of God may be eminently revealed, in puniſhing their impiety, injuſtice, and treachery: that thoſe who have made themſelves rich with the ſpoils, and drunk with the blood, not only of their innocent ſubjects and neighbours, but of the ſaints and martyrs of Jeſus, may have blood given them to drink, *becauſe they are worthy*, while they perſiſt in thoſe inhuman practices: that as God, when he had deſtroyed Pharaoh and his army in the mighty waters of the Red-ſea, gave repeated victories to his church till he had ſettled them in the land he had promiſed them; ſo he may purſue thoſe enemies whom he has lately conquered, till he has made his church a *quiet habitation, a tabernacle that ſhall not be taken down*[b]: that all thoſe antichriſtian perſecutors, who are not willing Chriſt ſhould reign ſo much as in the hearts of his people, may be made to feel the weight of his *rod of iron*[c], if they will not bow to the ſcepter of his mercy: that the proteſtant intereſt may flouriſh and proſper, and thoſe of the reform'd religion in France, who have long hazarded their lives in the defence of that and their civil

[b] Iſa. 33. 20. [c] Pſal. 2. 9.

liberty,

liberty, may be effectually *delivered from the hands of their enemies, to ſerve God without fear, in holineſs and righteouſneſs before him, all the days of their lives* [d]. It becomes us to ſympathize with them in their afflictions in the midſt of our triumphs, and by no means to *forget Jeruſalem*, but *to prefer her proſperity above our chief joy* [e]: and we ought to pray, that all who love her, and ſeek her good, may proſper; that they may increaſe in vigor and luſtre *like the ſun, when he goes out in his might.* Let us pray that a ſeries of victories and triumphs may attend the reign of queen Anne, till her and our enemies are brought to reaſon, and that we may long enjoy the advantages we poſſeſs under the influence of her happy government. Let us contribute what we can to the ſupport of it, and to the ſucceſs of her arms, at leaſt by our conſtant and fervent prayers; for there is no law to reſtrain any of us from rendering ſervice to her majeſty and to our native country after this pious manner.

Laſtly, Let us give God the glory that is due to his name, for all that he has already done for us, and reſolve on all like occaſions to celebrate his praiſe. Let us imitate the gratitude of Moſes and Iſrael; *I will ſing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed glorioufly, the horſe and his rider hath he thrown into the ſea. The Lord is my ſtrength and ſong, and he is become my ſalvation: he is my*

[d] Luke 1. 75. | [e] Pſal. 137. 5, 6.

God,

God, and I will prepare him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. Jehovah *is a man of war:* Jehovah *is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his hoſt hath he caſt into the ſea: his choſen captains alſo are drowned in the Red-ſea. The depths have covered them: they ſank into the bottom as a ſtone. Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath daſhed in pieces the enemy; and in the greatneſs of thy excellency thou haſt overthrown them that roſe up againſt thee: thou ſenteſt forth thy wrath, which conſumed them as ſtubble*[f]. *The enemy ſaid, I will purſue, I will overtake, I will divide the ſpoil: my luſt ſhall be ſatisfied upon them; I will draw my ſword, my hand ſhall deſtroy them. Thou didſt blow with thy wind, the ſea covered them: they ſank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like unto thee, glorious in holineſs, fearful in praiſes, doing wonders*[g]? &c. And elſewhere, *I will publiſh,* ſays Moſes, *the name of the Lord: aſcribe ye greatneſs to our God. He is the rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, juſt and right is he*[h]. Let us ſing in the words of the pſalmiſt, *Let the righteous be glad, let them rejoice before God; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice. Sing unto God, ſing praiſes to his name: extol him that rideth*

[f] Exod. 15. 1——7.
[g] Ver. 9, 10, 11.
[h] Deut. 32. 3, 4.

upon

upon the heavens by his name Jah, and rejoice before him [i]. *The Lord gave the word, great was the company of thoſe that publiſhed it. Kings of armies did flee apace: and ſhe that tarried at home divided the ſpoil* [k]. *Bleſſed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our ſalvation. Selah. He that is our God, is the God of ſalvation: and unto God the Lord belong the iſſues from death. But God ſhall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy ſcalp of ſuch a one as goeth on ſtill in his treſpaſſes* [l]. *Bleſs ye God, in the congregations, even the Lord, from the fountain of Iſrael* [m]. *Thy God hath commanded thy ſtrength: ſtrengthen, O God, that which thou haſt wrought for us* [n]. —*Scatter thou the people that delight in war. Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth: O ſing praiſes unto the Lord. Selah* [o]. *Aſcribe ye ſtrength unto God: his excellency is over Iſrael, and his ſtrength is in the clouds. O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Iſrael is he, that giveth ſtrength and power unto his people. Bleſſed be God* [p]. And elſewhere: *O ſing unto the Lord a new ſong, for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory* [q].

But *what ſhall we render to the Lord for all his benefits? Wherewith ſhall we come before*

[i] Pſal. 68. 3, 4.
[k] Ver. 11, 12.
[l] Ver. 19, 20, 21.
[m] Ver. 26.
[n] Ver. 26.
[o] Ver. 30, 32.
[p] Ver. 34, 35.
[q] Pſal 98. 1.

the

the Lord, and bow ourſelves before the high God? Shall we *come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, or with ten thouſands of rivers of oil* [r]*?* No: tho the thankſgiving of his people was formerly expreſſed by theſe offerings, which are not required of us, ſince the oblation our Saviour made of himſelf once for all on the croſs; yet God expected from them, and much more expects from us another kind of ſacrifices: *the ſacrifice of praiſe, the calves of our lips* [s]*:* ſincere hearts and pure affections. *Bleſs the Lord,* ſays the pſalmiſt, *O my ſoul, and all that is within me, bleſs his holy name. Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul, and forget not all his benefits* [s]. A holy and regular converſation: *He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God* [t]*?* That we *preſent our bodies,* as well as ſouls, *a living ſacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reaſonable ſervice* [u]. That we *forget not to do good and to communicate; for with ſuch ſacrifices God is well pleaſed* [v]. We are not to ſatisfy ourſelves in laying aſide our ordinary affairs, and in devoting ſome little time to the ſervice of God, in appearing in his ſanctuary, and expreſſing joy in our coun-

[r] Mic. 6. 6, 7.
[s] Hoſ. 14. 2. Heb. 13. 15.
[s] Pſal. 103. 1, 2.
[t] Mic. 6. 8.
[u] Rom. 12. 1.
[v] Heb. 13. 16.

tenances,

tenances, in ſpeaking and hearing of God's wonderful works, and in ſinging his praiſes with our tongues; but theſe ought to make a very deep and laſting impreſſion on our minds, ſhould endear the ſervice of his temple to us, where he has ſo graciouſly heard our prayers, and thereby *compaſſed us about with ſongs of deliverance* [w]. The reflections we make on the mighty works of God, which are juſtly *marvellous in our eyes* [x], ſhould excite our love and exalt our devotion, confirm our faith and encourage our hope, and inſpire us with holy reſolutions of ſerving him with thoſe lives, that liberty, and thoſe eſtates which he has defended and ſecured, according to the precepts of that holy religion, the free exerciſe of which he has preſerved to us. *Whoſo offers praiſe*, ſays God himſelf, *glorifies me*; *and to him that orders his converſation aright, will I ſhew the ſalvation of God* [y].

And ſuffer me particularly to recommend to you the remembrance of the poor on this joyful occaſion. When the Jews prevailed againſt their enemies, and ſolemnized the feaſt of Purim for a time of thankſgiving, as they ſent *portions one to another*, ſo *they* ſent *gifts to the poor* [z]. If, on a day of faſting, we are required to *deal our bread to the hungry, and to bring the poor that are caſt out into our houſes*; *when we ſee the naked, to cover*

[w] Pſal. 32. 7.
[x] Pſal. 118. 23.
[y] Pſal. 50. 23.
[z] Eſth. 9. 22.

him,

him, and not to hide ourſelves from our own fleſh [a]; to *draw out* our *ſouls to the hungry, and to ſatisfy the afflicted ſoul* [b]; how reaſonable is the exerciſe of this charity on a day of thankſgiving! a proper occaſion of acknowledging God's mercy to us, in being merciful to thoſe who bear his image. We have been inquiring what returns we ſhall make to the Lord our God: tho our *goodneſs extends not to him*, yet it ought to be diffuſed among *the ſaints that are on earth* [c]; nay, we ought to *do good to all men, tho eſpecially to them that are of the houſhold of faith* [d]. Our Saviour was pleaſed in the days of his fleſh perſonally to receive the charity of his followers; now he is aſcended into heaven he is above thoſe neceſſities: yet he interprets what his people receive for his ſake, as if taken by his own hand, and applied to his own uſe. *I was hungry*, ſays he, *and ye gave me meat*; *I was thirſty, and ye gave me drink: I was a ſtranger, and ye took me in*; *naked, and ye clothed me: I was ſick, and ye viſited me*; *I was in priſon, and ye came unto me* [e]. *Verily I ſay unto you, inaſmuch as ye have done it unto one of the leaſt of theſe my brethren, ye have done it unto me* [f]. Can there be a more fit occaſion than this day of joy and triumph offers you, to diſtribute your bounty to refreſh the bowels of the poor, that *the bleſ-*

[a] Iſa. 58. 7.
[b] Ver. 10.
[c] Pſal. 16. 2.
[d] Gal. 6. 10.
[e] Mat. 25. 35, 36.
[f] Ver. 40.

ſing

ſing of him that was ready to periſh may come upon you; and that you may *cauſe the widow's heart to ſing for joy* [g]: for, to uſe the words of the apoſtle, *the adminiſtration of this ſervice not only ſupplies the want of the ſaints, but is abundant alſo by many thankſgivings unto God* [h].

Need I add any thing to excite you to praiſe the God of our mercies, after I have repreſented to you how much an unworthy and ſinful nation has been the care of his providence, and how much we owe him for that important change he has made in the ſtate of affairs in Europe, in favour of the proteſtant intereſt? The duty of thankſgiving is reaſonable, neceſſary, and pleaſant; 'tis the buſineſs and pleaſure of the higheſt order of rational creatures, the *holy angels that always behold the face of our heavenly father* [i]. We cannot neglect this duty without contracting the guilt of the blackeſt ingratitude, and incurring the diſpleaſure of a jealous God. As his temple is called the houſe of prayer, ſo it is termed *the praiſes of Iſrael* [k], to ſhew that praiſe is an eſſential part of his worſhip as well as prayer. 'Tis an eaſe and pleaſure to a grateful mind, to acknowledge the obligations which it can never diſcharge. 'Tis very acceptable to God, as well as agreeable to every ingenuous ſoul: and on that account we may apply to

[g] Job 29. 13.
[h] 2 Cor. 9. 12.
[i] Mat. 18. 10.
[k] Pſal. 22. 3.

it what Jotham in his parable ſays of the fruit of the vine, that it *chears both God and man* [l]. 'Tis a pleaſing ſacrifice to him, and a pleaſant duty to all that ſincerely perform it: *Praiſe ye the Lord*, ſays the pſalmiſt, *for it is good to ſing praiſes unto our God, for it is pleaſant; and praiſe is comely* [m]. But we muſt always remember, that our lives are to praiſe him as well as our lips: and if his *goodneſs* has that influence upon us, as effectually to *lead us to repentance* [n], we ſhall be ſecure of the divine favour, and have more of theſe occaſions to *enter into his gates with thankſgiving, and into his courts with praiſe* [o]. For who *ſhall harm us, if we be followers of that which is good* [p]? *And if God be for us, who can be againſt us?* If he *ariſe, his enemies will be ſcattered; and thoſe that hate him ſhall flee before him* [q].

[l] Judg. 9. 13.
[m] Pſal. 147. 1.
[n] Rom. 2. 4.
[o] Pſal. 100. 4.
[p] 1 Pet. 3. 13.
[q] Pſal. 68. 1.

A ſermon preach'd on *Thurſday* the 27th of *June*, 1706. being the day appointed by her majeſty for a ſolemn thankſgiving to almighty God for the late glorious progreſs of her majeſty's arms, and thoſe of her allies, in *Flanders* and *Spain*.

SERMON VI.

Deut. xxxiii. 29.

Happy art thou, O Iſrael! Who is like unto thee, O people, ſaved by the Lord! the ſhield of thy help, and who is the ſword of thy excellency! And thine enemies ſhall be found liars unto thee; and thou ſhalt tread upon their high places.

WHEN Moſes the law-giver and judge of Iſrael, and the greateſt prophet under the old teſtament, was admoniſh'd of his approaching death; the very day he receives an order from heaven to aſcend mount Nebo and die there, he takes his ſolemn

leave of that people, whom he had brought out of Egypt, and conducted thro' the wilderneſs to the borders of Canaan [r]: and this he does firſt by a prophetick ſong in the foregoing chapter, which contains an account of the great bleſſings God would beſtow on them in caſe of their obedience to his commands, and of the terrible judgments that would purſue them, if they ſhould revolt from the true religion; and then by pronouncing particular bleſſings on the ſeveral tribes of Iſrael in this chapter, which he concludes with a general bleſſing on the whole nation.

'Tis true, the name of Simeon is not here mentioned among the reſt of the tribes, who are diſtinguiſhed by the names of their fathers; but ſome Greek copies of the Septuagint make the tribe of Simeon, who was next in order of birth to Reuben, ſhare with his poſterity the bleſſing contained in the 6th verſe, which they thus render: *Let Reuben live, and not die; and let Simeon be many in number:* tho ſome interpreters are better pleaſed with the Targum of Jonathan, which finds a place for Simeon in the bleſſing of Judah; becauſe when the land of promiſe came to be divided, the ſacred text ſays, *their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah* [r]: and therefore the expeditions made by this tribe againſt the Ca-

[r] Chap. 32. 48, 49. | [r] Joſh. 19. 1.

naanites,

naanites, were in concert with the tribe of Simeon [s].

But whatever difficulty there may ſeem in aſſigning them a diſtinct bleſſing in this chapter, there is no room to doubt of their intereſt in that general and comprehenſive one which cloſes it.

As it was the uſual practice of the antient patriarchs to bleſs their children a little before their death, as appears in the inſtance of Iſaac, who, when he was dim with age, and in the daily expectation of death, pronounced a bleſſing on his two ſons [t]; and of Jacob, who, *by faith when he was dying, bleſſed both the ſons of Joſeph*, and then all his own ſons, who were the heads of the tribes of Iſrael [u]; ſo Moſes, who was king in Jeſhurun [v], as the common father of this people, piouſly recommends them to the care of heaven, and predicts the great favours and privileges with which God deſign'd to honour them, as the beginning of the chapter aſſures us: *And this is the bleſſing wherewith Moſes, the man of God, bleſſed the children of Iſrael before his death* [w].

After the particular bleſſings pronounced on the different tribes, he foretels the proſperity of the whole body of that people, who were under the ſpecial protection of the true God whom they worſhipped, and going to

[s] Judg. 1. 3.
[t] Gen. 27.
[u] Heb. 11. 21. Gen. 48, and chap. 49.
[v] Deut. 33. 5.
[w] Ver. 1.

be introduced by his power into the poſſeſſion of a very pleaſant and fruitful country. The terms he uſes on this occaſion are very lofty, and expreſs a very ſenſible pleaſure in the mind of him who uttered them: *There is none like unto the God of Jeſhurun, who rideth upon the heaven for thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlaſting arms: and he ſhall thruſt out the enemy from before thee, and ſhall ſay, Deſtroy them. Iſrael then ſhall dwell in ſafety alone: the fountain of Jacob ſhall be upon a land of corn and wine; alſo his heavens ſhall drop down dew* [x].

And now the review he takes of the great things God had already done for them, together with the proſpect he has of the new miracles the Almighty was about to perform in their favour, throws him into a tranſport of joy and wonder, and makes him celebrate their happineſs after a very elegant manner in our text: *Happy art thou, O Iſrael! Who is like unto thee, O people, ſaved by the Lord! the ſhield of thy help, and who is the ſword of thy excellency! And thine enemies ſhall be found liars unto thee; and thou ſhalt tread upon their high places.*

In which words the prophet,

1*ſt*, Admires the happy ſtate of the Iſraelites above all other nations; *Happy art thou, O Iſrael! Who is like unto thee!*

[x] Ver. 26, 27, 28.

2*dly*,

2*dly*, Declares wherein their happineſs conſiſted, *viz.* in the favour of God, by whom they were defended from their enemies, and made to triumph over them; which is expreſſed in theſe terms: *O people, ſaved by the Lord! the ſhield of thy help, and who is the ſword of thy excellency! And thy enemies ſhall be found liars unto thee; and thou ſhalt tread upon their high places.*

1. As to the terms in which Moſes admires the peculiar happineſs of Iſrael, they have a great deal of force in them in the original. The word here tranſlated *happy*, is the ſame that is frequently uſed by the pſalmiſt, to ſignify the great happineſs that attends a religious courſe of life: *Bleſſed is the man*, ſays he, *who walketh not in the counſel of the ungodly* [y], &c. *Bleſſed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Bleſſed are they who keep his teſtimonies* [z]. *Bleſſed is every one that feareth the Lord* [a]. In all which places the word *bleſſed* might be rendered the bleſſedneſs or happineſs, or, if our language would bear it, happineſſes, according to the Hebrew idiom; and imports as much as when we ſay in Engliſh, O the happineſs of a pious man! O the many bleſſings that accompany the exerciſe of holineſs and religion! The ſame emphaſis is in our text, where the ſame word is employed: *Happy art thou, O Iſrael!* or

[y] Pſal. 1. 1.
[z] Pſal. 119. 1, 2.
[a] Pſal. 128. 1.

thy happineſs, *O Iſrael! i. e.* How great is thy happineſs! how numerous the bleſſings which attend thee, O Iſrael! Thus the queen of Sheba, charm'd with the order and magnificence of Solomon's court, and with the wiſdom of his diſcourſes, cries out in an ecſtaſy of wonder, *Happy are thy men*, &c. or, O the happineſs of thy men! *the happineſs of theſe thy ſervants! who ſtand continually before thee; who hear thy wiſdom* [b].

Happy art thou, O Iſrael! Who is like unto thee! i. e. Who may compare with thee for happineſs! what nation can boaſt of ſo many bleſſings and privileges as are enjoyed by thee! The prophet had juſt before ſaid, *There is none like the God of Jeſhurun* [c]; and now he declares there is none like the people who worſhipped him. What God ſo great as Jehovah! what people ſo happy as Iſrael! He challenges the whole world to produce the like inſtance of a happy nation: *O Iſrael, who is like unto thee!* Juſt as he before appeals to the judgment of their enemies, whether their idol deities were to be compared to the God of Iſrael? *For their rock*, ſays he, *is not as our rock, even our enemies themſelves being judges* [d].

The happy condition of the Iſraelites above all other people, and the greatneſs of their God above other gods, is obſerved by the prophet David, when he commemorates

[b] 1 Kings 10. 8.
[c] Deut. 33. 26.
[d] Chap. 32. 31.

their

their wonderful redemption from Egypt by the hand of the great God, who had alſo made known to them the true religion, and entred into a ſolemn covenant with them: *Wherefore thou art great*, ſays he, *O Lord God! for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beſides thee—And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Iſrael, whom God went to redeem for a people unto himſelf, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people which thou didſt redeem to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? For thou haſt confirmed to thyſelf thy people Iſrael, to be a people to thee for ever; and thou, Lord, art become their God* [e].

Their privilege in being entruſted with the word of God, by which their duty in all the parts of it was made known to them, is alſo celebrated by the pſalmiſt as a very great and peculiar bleſſing: *He ſhews his word to Jacob, his ſtatutes and judgments to Iſrael: he hath not dealt ſo with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praiſe ye the Lord* [f].

And Moſes excites them to a ſtrict obſervance of the laws of God, by repreſenting to them how much this would raiſe their reputation among the heathen, who ſhould be forc'd to confeſs that no nation under heaven was ſo great, and wiſe, and happy as they, for the excellency of their laws and conſti-

[e] 2 Sam. 7. 22, 23. | [f] Pſal. 147. 19, 20.

tutions, and the greatneſs of their privileges, eſpecially that of offering their prayers to the true God, and receiving favourable anſwers from him: *Keep therefore, and do them*, ſays he, ſpeaking of the divine commands; *for this is your wiſdom and your underſtanding, in the ſight of the nations which ſhall hear all theſe ſtatutes, and ſay, Surely this great nation is a wiſe and underſtanding people; for what nation is there ſo great, who hath God ſo nigh unto them as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there ſo great, that hath ſtatutes and judgments ſo righteous, as all this law which I ſet before you this day*[z]?

So that if we refer both to what Moſes had obſerved to them before, and to what he inſiſts on in our text, it muſt be confeſſed no people might compare with Iſrael for happineſs, ſeeing they ſurpaſſed all other nations for the equity and perfection of their laws, and the purity of their worſhip, as well as for their miraculous deliverances and ſurpriſing victories. For having ſaid, *Happy art thou, O Iſrael! who is like unto thee?* he explains himſelf in the following words, *O people, ſaved by the Lord! who is the ſhield of thy help, and the ſword of thy excellency! And thine enemies ſhall be found liars unto thee; and thou ſhalt tread upon their high places.* And indeed the bleſſings here mentioned ſuppoſe thoſe recited before; for God exerted his

[z] Deut. 4. 6, 7, 8.

power

power in their favour for the honour of his name, and of the religion they profeſſed; and the victories they obtain'd were the reward of their piety and holineſs, or at leaſt the encouragement of their repentance.

This leads us therefore to conſider,

2. The account given us wherein their happineſs conſiſted; namely, in the favour of God, who ſecured them from the power of their enemies, and made them triumph over them. For this happy ſtate is,

Firſt, Declared in general, and then more particularly deſcribed.

(1.) Their happineſs is expreſſed in general, in that they were a *people ſaved by the Lord*; that is, delivered after an extraordinary manner, ſo as to diſtinguiſh them from all other nations, who only enjoyed the common benefits of the divine providence, but were not the objects of God's peculiar favour. And *to be ſaved by the Lord*, not only ſignifies to be protected by him, but to be rendered proſperous and victorious by his power. The Chaldee paraphraſe renders the words, *O people, whoſe ſalvation is from the face of the Lord*; that is, by his ſpecial favour: and the word *ſalvation* is of ſo great extent in the Hebrew tongue, that it ſeems ſometimes to comprize in it all ſorts of bleſſings; therefore God himſelf is called *our ſalvation* [h], and the prophecies of the old teſtament deſcribe our bleſſed Saviour by the ſame title, which is

[h] Exod. 15. 2. Pſal. 27. 1. and 118. 21. Luke 2. 30.

alſo given him in the new. And this term is frequently uſed to ſignify victory [i] as well as defence, and is ſometimes ſo rendered in our Engliſh tranſlation. But,

(2.) There is a more particular account given us of the happineſs of Iſrael in the terms that follow, which plainly denote both their deliverances and victories, ſeeing God is ſaid to be both *the ſhield of their help, and the ſword of their excellency:* for a ſhield is an inſtrument uſed for defence, as a ſword is for execution and ſlaughter.

As God is the protector of his people, he is often called their ſhield: *I am thy ſhield* [k], ſays God himſelf to Abraham; and ſays the pſalmiſt, *Our ſoul waiteth for the Lord, he is our help and our ſhield* [l]: which is the ſame thing with *the ſhield of their help* in our text. And 'tis to the ſame purpoſe that he is called a *rock*, a *fortreſs*, and *high tower* [m]: for theſe terms, which properly ſignify places fortified either by nature or art, elegantly repreſent the ſafety of thoſe who are under the divine protection.

The ſword of thy excellency is rendered by ſome, *the ſword of thy lifting up*; and thought to expreſs the action of a warrior, who raiſes his weapon high when he deſigns to exert his utmoſt ſtrength in a full blow on the head of his enemy; and ſo may denote a compleat

[i] 2 Sam. 23. 10. Pſal. 98. 1.
[k] Gen. 15. 1. *See alſo* Pſal. 84. 11.
[l] Pſal. 33. 20.
[m] Pſal. 18. 1.

conqueſt:

conqueſt: which ſeems to be the ſenſe of the Chaldee interpreter, who renders this phraſe *the victories of thy ſtrength.* Others tranſlate it, *the ſword of thy glory*; by which may be ſignified the honour God did them in bleſſing their arms with ſo many glorious victories. But the Septuagint turns it, *the ſword of thy glorying or boaſting*; which may reſpect the pious acknowledgment they ought to make to God as the author of all their victories, and their intire confidence in his aſſiſtance: and this laſt ſenſe is expreſſed by the Syriac verſion, *thy help is in the Lord, and thy glory not in the ſword*; i. e. not in thy own ſword. To the ſame effect ſpeaks the pſalmiſt: *Thou art my king, O God, command deliverances for Jacob. Thro' thee will we puſh down our enemies: thro' thy name will we tread them under that riſe up againſt us. For I will not truſt in my bow, neither ſhall my ſword ſave me. But thou haſt ſaved us from our enemies, and haſt put to ſhame them that hated us. In God we boaſt all the day long: and praiſe thy name for ever* [n].

When Moſes declares that *their enemies ſhould be found liars unto them*, or *ſhould lie unto them*; it may either ſignify the fraud and perfidiouſneſs of their enemies, which yet ſhould not ſecure them from the forces of the conquering tribes, who ſhould execute juſt vengeance upon them for their treachery by treading on their high places; or that

[n] Pſal. 44. 4——8.

their

their enemies would make uſe of lying artifices and pretences of friendſhip to engage them to accept terms of peace, as the Gibeonites afterwards did in the time of Joſhua at the approach of the Iſraelites [o]: or that they ſhould ſubmit themſelves to Iſrael, for ſo the ſame word is elſewhere rendered—*The ſtrangers ſhall ſubmit themſelves unto me* [p], ſays the pſalmiſt, or, *ſhall lie unto me*; that is, ſhall feign themſelves pleaſed with my government, when their fear ſhall oblige them to ſubmit. Or, laſtly, it may be tranſlated, *they ſhall fail or be fruſtrated:* to which purpoſe this word is uſed by the prophet Hoſea, when he ſays, *The wine ſhall fail* [q]; and by Habakkuk, when he ſays, *The labour of the olive ſhall fail* [r]. And a like phraſe is uſed in the Latin tongue, *Spem mentita ſeges* [s], to ſignify a crop failing mens expectation. So that the ſenſe may be, "Thy enemies ſhall "be utterly diſappointed, their big hopes "ſhall become abortive, and their vain "boaſts ſhall prove but idle dreams and "fictions."

As for the phraſe of treading upon their high places, it ſeems deſcriptive of the mountainous country that Iſrael was to conquer [s], ſome of which mountains were poſſeſſed by the Anakim, who were men of a gigantick

[o] Joſh. 9.
[p] Pſal. 18. 44.
[q] Hoſ. 9. 2.
[r] Habak. 3. 17.
[s] Horat.
[s] Mic. 1. 3.

ſtature,

ſtature, and had cities well fortified therein [t]; which agrees with what Moſes ſays to the tribes in the foregoing chapter, when he ſpeaks of God's ſpecial favour to them: *He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increaſe of the fields: and he made him ſuck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock* [u]. Or, *to tread on high places*, may ſignify the indignation God commanded this people to expreſs againſt idolatry, in breaking down and trampling upon the images of the Canaanites, which were ordinarily ſet up on the tops of hills [v]; and therefore the places of idolatrous worſhip are ſo often term'd *high places* in the holy ſcripture. Tho ſome are of opinion, that this ſentence ſhould be tranſlated, *Thou ſhalt tread upon their necks*, or, according to the Chaldee paraphraſe, *on the necks of kings*; that is, *thou ſhalt triumph over them*. This was literally fulfilled on ſome of the kings of Canaan, who were ſubdued by Joſhua, and thus treated by his order; who, when he had made them priſoners, *called for all the men of Iſrael, and ſaid to the captains of the men of war, who went with him, Come near; put your feet upon the necks of theſe kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them* [w]. After which they were put to death. And it is not unlikely that the royal pſalmiſt alludes to this, when he

[t] Joſh. 11. 21.
[u] Deut. 32. 12. Iſa. 58. 14.
[v] Deut. 12. 2, 3.
[w] Joſh. 10. 24, 26.

acknow-

acknowledges the honour God had done him, in *giving him the necks of his enemies* [x]; and in his prophecy of the glorious kingdom of the Meſſiah, *The Lord ſaid unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footſtool* [y]. However, 'tis certain the holy ſcripture often ſpeaks of treading upon enemies, to ſignify their intire overthrow, and the contemptible condition to which they are reduced, as well as to expreſs the triumph of the conquerors: *Thro' God we ſhall do valiantly*, ſays king David; *for he it is that ſhall tread down our enemies* [z]. And the pſalmiſt ſeems to propheſy the triumph of Jeſus Chriſt over his enemies, when he ſays, *Thou ſhalt tread upon the lion and adder*; *the young lion and the dragon ſhalt thou trample under feet* [a].

Upon the whole it appears, that as our text contains the laſt words of Moſes, the expiring prophet, in an ecſtaſy of joy and wonder, therein repreſents the great and peculiar happineſs of the Iſraelitiſh nation, in that they were under the ſpecial care and protection of the true God, who made them ſucceſsful and victorious, while he fruſtrated the deſigns and diſappointed the attempts of their enemies, and made them ſubmit to their power, and furniſh matter for their triumphs.

[x] Pſal. 18. 40.
[y] Pſal. 110. 1.
[z] Pſal. 108. 13.
[a] Pſal. 91. 13.

The

The words thus explained, give me a fair occaſion more particularly to obſerve to you,

I. How well the terms of our text agree with the hiſtory of Iſrael.
II. How very happy that people was, in being ſo peculiarly favoured by God.
III. I ſhall apply theſe things to our preſent circumſtances, and the occaſion of the ſolemn joy of this day.

But I ſhall firſt premiſe a few things, to obviate the difficulties, and prevent the objections that might otherwiſe occur in my way.

1. It may well be ſuppoſed that theſe words of Moſes not only refer to the eminent deliverance of the Iſraelites from the Egyptian army, their preſervation and ſucceſſes in the deſart, and the new victories they were to expect over the Canaanites, whoſe country they were juſt going to invade; but are alſo a prophecy of all the remarkable deliverances and conqueſts with which it pleaſed God to bleſs that nation thro' all ſucceeding ages, till by their contempt of the true Meſſiah, and their obſtinate rejection of his doctrine, they forfeited the protection of God, and were utterly diſclaim'd and abandon'd by him. Therefore,

2. Theſe words are not to be thought abſolutely to predict an uninterrupted ſeries of ſucceſſes to this people, after what manner ſoever they ſhould behave themſelves; but

with certain limitations and conditions, which God made, in order to keep them in a conſtant ſubjection to his laws, and dependance on his providence.

It was neceſſary that the cauſe for which they engag'd in war ſhould be juſt and approved by God, otherwiſe they had no reaſon to expect the interpoſition of his providence in their favour. Therefore king Solomon ſpecifies this condition, when he prays that this people might be ſucceſsful in war: *If thy people go out to war againſt their enemies by the way that thou ſhalt ſend them, and they pray unto thee toward this city which thou haſt choſen, and the houſe which I have built for thy name; then hear thou from the heavens their prayer, and their ſupplication, and maintain their cauſe* [b]. Which prayer was accepted of God, as the following chapter declares. And on the occaſion of a great victory obtained over the Hagarites by ſome of the tribes of Iſrael, the ſacred hiſtorian ſays, *They were helped againſt them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hands, and all that were with them: for they cried unto God in the battle, and he was intreated of them, becauſe they put their truſt in him. And they took away their cattle—and of men a hundred thouſand. For there fell down many ſlain; for the war was of God* [c].

[b] 2 Chron. 6. 34, 35. | [c] 1 Chron. 5. 20, 21, 22.

The

The paſſages juſt now mentioned ſhew, that as the occaſion of their going to war ought to be lawful and juſt, ſo it was requiſite to implore the divine aſſiſtance, by offering up ſolemn prayers for the ſucceſs of their arms; otherwiſe they could not reaſonably promiſe themſelves that the goodneſs of their cauſe would ſecure them, but might juſtly fear a defeat, as the puniſhment of their ſelf-confidence and impiety.

Another condition to qualify them for victory, was their ſtrict adherence to the true religion, and their obſervance of the commands of God, without which they had reaſon to expect that all their prayers would be rejected as mere formality and hypocriſy, and themſelves ſeverely chaſtiſed by the hands of thoſe pagan nations whoſe idols they adopted, and whoſe manners they imitated. Therefore Moſes often foretels the many calamities which would befal them, whenever they ſhould revolt from the true religion, and particularly in his ſong in the foregoing chapter: *But Jeſhurun waxed fat and kick'd——He forſook God who made him, and lightly eſteemed the rock of his ſalvation. They provoked him to jealouſy with ſtrange Gods; with abominations provoked they him to anger* [d], &c. *And when the Lord ſaw it, he abhorred them, becauſe of the provoking of his ſons and of his daughters: and he ſaid, I will hide my face from them* [e]——*I will*

[d] Deut. 32. 15, 16. | [e] Ver. 19, 20.

heap miſchiefs upon them, I will ſpend mine arrows upon them [f]. —— *The ſword without, and terror within, ſhall deſtroy both the young man and the virgin; the ſuckling, with the man of grey hairs* [g].

'Tis true, their unworthy and ingrateful carriage towards God, did not always ſtop the courſe of their ſucceſſes: ſometimes it pleaſed the Almighty to give them extraordinary proofs of his compaſſion, as well by his goodneſs to lead them to repentance, as to ſilence the blaſphemy, and curb the inſolence of their enemies; but they had no promiſes of deliverance and victory, except on the condition of a ſerious repentance and a national reformation, on which terms they might hope for the divine ſuccour, as appears by Solomon's prayer: *If they ſin againſt thee, for there is no man who ſinneth not; and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies* —— *If they return unto thee with all their heart and all their ſoul* —— *Then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling-place, their prayer, and their ſupplication, and maintain their cauſe; and forgive thy people who have ſinned againſt thee* [h].

3. We may remark, that this prophecy of Moſes may be reaſonably interpreted to reſpect not only the church of God under the old teſtament, but alſo that under the

[f] Ver. 23.
[g] Ver. 25.
[h] 2 Chron. 6. 36——39.

new.

new. For ſeeing the Jewiſh nation are allowed to have been a type of the chriſtian church, the deliverances and victories of the former may well be accounted ſo many pledges and patterns of the wonderful preſervation and triumphs of the latter, eſpecially in ſuch ages of the world wherein the circumſtances of the one ſhould reſemble thoſe of the other. It will be found very difficult to explain many of the prophecies contained in the holy ſcripture, without ſuch an accommodation as this. And the new teſtament frequently applies to chriſtians thoſe promiſes which were originally made to the Jews in general, nay, ſometimes to a particular member of the antient church. The promiſe made to Joſhua, for inſtance, to encourage his invaſion of Canaan [i], is by the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews, applied to all true chriſtians, *I will never leave thee, nor forſake thee* [k]; to fortify them againſt all the difficulties they might expect to encounter. For ſince the wiſdom, power, and mercy of God are ſtill the ſame, what reaſon is there to doubt of his readineſs to diſplay thoſe perfections for the ſupport and welfare of his people, whenever their preſſing neceſſities and dangers, their hearty repentance for their paſt offences againſt God, their fervent ſupplication to him, and intire dependance on him, render it conſiſtent with

[i] Deut. 31. 6. Joſh. 1. 5. | [k] Heb. 13. 5.

his honour to give them victory over their enemies?

4. The predictions in our text, and thoſe of the like kind in other parts of the holy ſcripture, are not to be extended to the caſe of every good man, but to thoſe civil communities in which the true worſhip of God is maintained, and moral virtues countenanced and promoted. Some of the beſt of men have become victims to the fury of their enemies by an unjuſt perſecution; and this is wiſely permitted by the providence of God, both for their own improvement in grace and holineſs, and for the advancement of religion in the minds of others by their example. But when any nation, or large ſociety of men, are engaged in a juſt quarrel, and with true humiliation for their ſins and reformation of their lives, ſeek the favour of God, and depend on his aſſiſtance, 'tis the conſtant courſe of providence to eſpouſe their cauſe, and render them victorious over the enemies of their liberty and religion. Nay, heathen nations have often been remarkably bleſſed with proſperity and ſucceſs, when, according to the meaſure of their knowledge, they have applied themſelves to the cultivation of morality and the practice of virtue, and have diſcouraged vice and profaneneſs.

Nor does this any way impeach the juſtice of God: for ſeeing the ſpecial time of rewarding the virtues of particular men is after

after this life, and this in proportion to their good works, and ſufferings on the account of religion; it can be no injuſtice to expoſe them to thoſe afflictions, which ſhall occaſion the inhancement of their future happineſs. And ſeeing civil communities are not to be rewarded as ſuch in the world to come, where the judgment is only of particular perſons; 'tis no wonder that God thinks fit to recompenſe them here, to encourage the practice of thoſe virtues which are neceſſary to the well-being of ſociety.

So that any nation may reaſonably expect the like happineſs with that attributed to Iſrael in the text, on the ſame terms which qualified that people for it; namely, a firm adherence to the true religion, and to the practice of morality.

With theſe precautions I proceed, according to the method before propoſed,

I. To conſider how well the terms in our text ſuit the antient ſtate of the Iſraelites.

But here it can't be expected that I ſhould give any other than a general account of this matter: the holy ſcripture is full of inſtances which verify theſe words of Moſes. As this people were eminently ſaved by the Lord, he is called their *ſaviour*, and *the rock of their ſalvation.* How often did he appear to be the *ſhield of their help!* They were wonderfully preſerved from the cruel deſigns of the king of Egypt, notwithſtand-

ing the ſtrict orders he had given for the maſſacre of all their male infants, that ſo the whole race of them might be extirpated; and from the fury of the Egyptian army, which hotly purſued them when they left that country at the command of God, where they had been in a ſtate of tedious ſervitude. How well were they guarded by the providence of God during their pilgrimage in the deſart, and when they took poſſeſſion of the promis'd land! How well defended from the inſults of their neighbouring enemies, who envied their ſettlement in Canaan! When all the men of Iſrael repaired to Jeruſalem at the three annual feaſts, their frontiers were miraculouſly protected; and thoſe enemies who at other times attempted to diſpoſſeſs them, were ſo reſtrain'd by a ſecret influence of God's power on their minds, that they did not ſo much as *deſire their land* [l], while they were engaged in the ſervice of God on thoſe feſtivals. How wonderfully was the plot of Haman fruſtrated, when he had form'd a deſign to extirpate the whole Jewiſh nation! And how remarkably was his malice return'd with vengeance on his own head, while the Jews had their *ſorrow turn'd into joy*, and their *mourning into a good day* [m]! And how eminently were they defended both from the calumnies and forces of their enemies,

[l] Exod. 34. 24. [m] Eſth. 9. 22.

when

when they rebuilt Jeruſalem in the time of Nehemiah [n]!

As God was *the ſhield of their help*, ſo he was *the ſword of their excellency*, in bleſſing their arms with frequent and ſurpriſing victories. While Moſes was lifting up his hands in ſolemn prayer for them, they defeated the Amalekites [o], who fell upon their rear in the wilderneſs; and alſo the Ammonites, who oppoſed their paſſage thro' their country in their march to Canaan, and whoſe inhoſpitality was puniſhed with a total overthrow; both Sihon their king, and Og the king of Baſhan, with their armies, being put to the ſword [p]. The Midianites were as intirely conquered by a ſmall detachment of the Iſraelites, under the command of Phineas, before they entered Canaan [q].

And when Joſhua took poſſeſſion of the promis'd land [r], a great number of kings and their armies fell by his ſword, tho their cities were fortified, their numerous troops ſtrengthened by confederacy, and ſome of their men of a prodigious ſtature. The time of the judges in like manner furniſhes us with the many ſtrange exploits and memorable victories of thoſe great men whom God raiſed up to aſſert the liberty of Iſrael, and avenge them of their malicious enemies [s]. It would be a work of time to give

[n] Neh. 4.
[o] Exod. 17.
[p] Numb. 21.
[q] Numb. 31.
[r] Joſh. ch. 9, 10, 11.
[s] Judg. ch. 4, 5, 7.

a juſt account of the many trophies the countries of Moab and Ammon, Philiſtia, and other parts of Canaan, afforded to Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Jeptha, Sampſon and Samuel [s]; of the mighty victories obtained, during the regal government, over the troops of Ammon, Amalek, and the Philiſtines, by Saul and Jonathan [t]; of the wonderful progreſs of the arms of David againſt the Jebuſites, Philiſtines, Amalekites, Edomites, Moabites, and Syrians [u]; which gave ſo great an enlargement to his dominions, and was the occaſion of ſo many triumphant pſalms. The utter defeat of the Ethiopian army, conſiſting of a million of men, by king Aſa [v]; the overthrow of the armies of Edom, Moab, and Ammon [w], which help to make the reign of Jehoſhaphat ſo bright a part of the Jewiſh hiſtory; Amaziah's victory over the Edomites [x], that of Jotham over the Ammonitiſh army [y]; and the miraculous ſlaughter of the Aſſyrians, with their diſgraceful retreat from the walls of Jeruſalem, when that city ſeem'd altogether uncapable of defence [z], are inconteſtable proofs how conſtantly God fought the battles of Iſrael, while they were ſubject to

[s] Chap. 14, 15, 16.
[t] 1 Sam. 7. and Chap. 11, 13, 14, 15.
[u] 1 Sam. 27. 2 Sam. 5. and 2 Sam. chap. 8, 9.
[v] 2 Chron. 14.
[w] Chap. 20.
[x] Chap. 25.
[y] Chap. 27.
[z] 2 Kings 19.

his

his laws, and depended on the conduct of his providence. To all which may be added the wonderful atchievements of this people, recorded in the two books of the Maccabees, and by Josephus.

The astonishing, and sometimes miraculous manner in which the Israelites were often preserved, and their enemies destroyed, could not but convince the world that the great God was on their side. Sometimes an unaccountable fear and consternation seized the hearts of their enemies, as Moses foretold in his triumphant song: *The people shall hear and be afraid; sorrow shall take hold of the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling, shall take hold upon them: all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them: by the greatness of thy arm they shall be as still as a stone* [a], &c. And in another place—*Ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword: and five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight* [b]. Thus the prodigious army of the Midianites fled before Gideon's three hundred men, and in their consternation madly turned every man his sword against his fellow. Sometimes the fiercest attacks made by the best disciplin'd troops of the enemies of Israel,

[a] Exod. 15. 14, 15, 16. | [b] Lev. 26. 7, 8.

proved

proved unſucceſsful; nor could their great numbers of horſes and of iron chariots, preſerve them from falling a prey to the proſperous arms of God's peculiar people. Theſe ſometimes were commanded to ſtand ſtill to ſee the ſalvation of God, while he delivered them by his own arm alone; as when he parted the Red-ſea to open a road for their eſcape, and to prepare a grave for their enemies, who were ſoon overwhelm'd by the returning waters: and in the time of Jehoſhaphat, when the confederate forces which came to attack that prince quarrelled among themſelves, and ſheath'd their ſwords in each other's bowels; ſo that his troops had nothing to do but to ſing the praiſes of God, and then load themſelves with the ſpoil, according to the prediction of Mattaniah: *Ye ſhall not need*, ſays he, *to fight in this battle; ſet yourſelves, ſtand ye ſtill, and ſee the ſalvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jeruſalem: fear not, nor be diſmayed; to morrow go out againſt them, for the Lord will be with you* [c].

The fall of the walls of Jericho at the ſound of rams-horns, the lamps and trumpets of Gideon's handful of men, ſhew thoſe ſucceſſes were more owing to the ſword of the Lord, than to that of Joſhua or Gideon. The reflection of the ſun on the waters [d], which occaſion'd a victory to Jehoſhaphat

[c] 2 Chron. 20. 17. [d] 2 Kings 3.

and

and the king in confederacy with him, by drawing their forces into an ambuſhment, ſerves to let us know that the divine providence ſometimes accompliſhes its ends by the moſt unthought of means, and can make any remote accident ſubſerve to the ruin of one army and the triumph of another: whereas at other times the power of God has been eminently diſplayed in miracles, to render his people ſafe, and to make them victorious. Thus the waters of the Red-ſea were ſeparated to preſerve Iſrael, and ſwallow up the power of Egypt: the ſun ſtands ſtill to favour Joſhua in the purſuit of his enemies, while the artillery of heaven is diſcharged againſt them, and hailſtones of an extraordinary weight kill more than the ſword of the conquerors [e]. And an angel is ſent to raiſe the ſiege of Jeruſalem, by cutting off 185000 of the Aſſyrian army in one night, which obliged the reſt immediately to retire from the walls of that city.

As theſe inſtances ſhew what reaſon Iſrael had to glory in *the ſword of the Lord*, which was lifted up in their defence, and rendered them conquerors; ſo they diſcover the vanity of the blaſphemous boaſts of their enemies, who were *found liars to them*, and often ſaw their vain-glorious threatenings come to nothing. Thus Moſes, in his ſong at the Red-ſea, obſerves, *The enemy ſaid, I will purſue, I will overtake, I will divide the*

[e] Joſh. 10.

ſpoil,

ſpoil, my luſt ſhall be ſatisfied upon them; I will draw my ſword, my hand ſhall deſtroy them [f]. But what follows! *Thou didſt blow with thy wind, the ſea covered them: they ſank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods! Who is like thee, glorious in holineſs, fearful in praiſes, doing wonders* [g]! After the like manner were the hopes of Zeba and Zalmunna, the princes of Midian, fruſtrated; *who ſaid, Let us take to ourſelves the houſes of God in poſſeſſion* [h]. How inſolent were the words of Rabſhakeh to the Jews, when he ſaid, *Let not Hezekiah deceive you, for he ſhall not be able to deliver you. Neither let Hezekiah make you truſt in the Lord, ſaying, the Lord will ſurely deliver us* [i]. —— *Beware leſt Hezekiah perſuade you, ſaying, The Lord will deliver us. Have any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Aſſyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they, amongſt all the gods of theſe lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand? that the Lord ſhould deliver Jeruſalem out of my hand* [k]? And the inſtructions given by that general to his meſſengers, are no leſs blaſphemous: *Thus ſhall ye ſpeak to Hezekiah king of Ju-*

[f] Exod. 15. 9.
[g] Ver. 10, 11.
[h] Pſal. 83. 12.
[i] Iſa. 36. 14, 15.
[k] Ver. 18, 19, 20.

dah,

dah, saying, Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria [l], &c. But these vain boasts were soon punished by the hand of an angel, and all these menaces had no other effect, than to shew the vanity and impiety of him who uttered them.

By what has been said, 'tis evident that the great God who marched before Israel when they came out of Egypt, in a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, as the symbol of his presence; and the captain of whose host appeared to Joshua with a drawn sword in his hand, to encourage that general to invade Canaan [m]; made the Israelites often tread upon the high places of their enemies, gave them success in war, and frequent triumphs, while they resigned themselves to his conduct, and obeyed his righteous laws.

II. I am next to shew how great was the happiness of this people, in being under the special care and protection of God, and blessed with frequent victories.

And at the very first view, that nation must needs appear to have been very happy, who were delivered from a most abject state of slavery, and whose liberty was asserted from heaven by a long train of miracles;

[l] Isa. 37. 10. [m] Josh. 5. 13, 14, 15.

who,

who, as they were eminently preſerved by God from the inſults of their enemies in their march to a *land flowing with milk and honey*, ſo were brought into the poſſeſſion of that fertile country by the moſt aſtoniſhing victories; and there made ſecurely to enjoy the happy conſequences of their military ſucceſſes and triumphs, and in caſe of any freſh attacks of their enemies, to go out to battle with the aſſurance of returning conquerors, and of ſinging new triumphal hymns to the praiſe of the Lord of hoſts, whoſe *right hand and holy arm obtained theſe victories* [n], and made them tread on the necks of their enemies.

Can any one doubt of the happy ſtate of that nation, who reap'd the fruits of their victories in the low ſubmiſſion of their enemies, in the awful reſpect of their neighbours, in the ſecurity of their lives, and in the quiet enjoyment of their eſtates in one of the happieſt climates in the world, where they might have the true reliſh of liberty, while they ſat *every man under his vine and fig-tree, none being able to make them afraid?* Nor did they only taſte the ſweets of all temporal bleſſings under an excellent civil conſtitution, and a body of laws compoſed by God himſelf, who was their governor as well as their ſaviour; but enjoyed thoſe nobler pleaſures that reſult from the knowledge

[n] Pſal. 91. 1.

and

and practice of a religion, the truth and excellency of which was demonstrated to them by the fullest evidence.

Their preservation from the attempts of their enemies, and their victories over them, include not only the immediate joy and glory of their triumphs, and the extent of the fame and terror of their arms in other countries; but also the consequent safety of their persons, the undisturbed conversation of their relations and friends, the prosperity of their families, the advancement of their trade and commerce, and the encouragement of their industry in the increase of their wealth, and in the improvement of arts and learning among them; and, which is more than all the rest, the flourishing state of religion, the liberty of worshipping the true God *without the fear of men*, and the opportunity of encouraging holiness and virtue at home, as well as that of spreading the knowledge of the true religion in other nations.

So that whatever can be supposed dear and valuable to men in this world, and whatever tends to make them happy for ever in the world to come, is comprehended in the description of the state of Israel in our text.

Thus we see how much reason Moses had to say, *Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord!* &c. as he elsewhere tells them, they should *be*

bleſſed above all people [o]; and ſometimes particularly recounts the various bleſſings that ſhould attend them, which are the ſame with thoſe we have been obſerving. *All theſe bleſſings ſhall come on thee and overtake thee, if thou ſhalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God. Bleſſed ſhalt thou be in the city, and bleſſed ſhalt thou be in the field: bleſſed ſhall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increaſe of thy kine, and the flocks of thy ſheep: bleſſed ſhall be thy basket and thy ſtore: bleſſed ſhalt thou be when thou comeſt in, and bleſſed ſhalt thou be when thou goeſt out. The Lord ſhall cauſe thine enemies that riſe up againſt thee, to be ſmitten before thy face: they ſhall come out againſt thee one way, and flee before thee ſeven ways—The Lord ſhall eſtabliſh thee a holy people to himſelf, and all the people of the earth ſhall ſee that thou art called by the name of the Lord, and they ſhall be afraid of thee—The Lord ſhall open unto thee his good treaſure, the heaven to give the rain to thy land in its ſeaſon, and to bleſs all the work of thy hand: and thou ſhalt lend to many nations, and thou ſhalt not borrow. And the Lord ſhall make thee the head only, and not the tail; and thou ſhalt be above only, and thou ſhalt not be beneath; if thou hearken to the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day to obſerve and do* [p].

[o] Deut. 7. 14. | [p] Deut. 28.

The

The view of the order of the camp of Iſrael in the wilderneſs, as well as the fame of what God had done for them, in delivering them from the bondage of Egypt, and in making them triumph over the Amalekites and Amorites, together with the prophetick diſcovery Balaam had of their future proſperity and glory, extorted bleſſings from the lips of that ſoothſayer, when he was tempted to curſe them, by the offer of a very great reward from the king of Moab. *How ſhall I curſe*, ſays he, *whom God hath not curſed? or how ſhall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied*[q]? *Behold I have received a command to bleſs, and he hath bleſſed, and I cannot reverſe it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he ſeen perverſeneſs in Iſrael. The Lord his God is with him, and the ſhout of a king is among them*[r]. *Surely there is no inchantment againſt Jacob, neither is there any divination againſt Iſrael: according to this time it ſhall be ſaid of Jacob and of Iſrael, What hath God wrought*[s]? *How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Iſrael*[t]! *God brought him forth out of Egypt: he hath as it were the ſtrength of an unicorn. He ſhall eat up the nations his enemies, and ſhall break their bones, and pierce them thro' with arrows.* ——*Bleſſed is he that bleſſeth thee, and curſed is he that*

[q] Num. 23. 8.
[r] Ver. 20, 21.
[s] Ver. 23.
[t] Chap. 24. 5.

curſeth thee [t]. I ſhall conclude this head with the words of the pſalmiſt: *Happy is that people that is in ſuch a caſe; yea, happy is that people whoſe God is Jehovah* [u].

III. I am now to apply the things on which I have inſiſted to our own circumſtances, and eſpecially to the happy occaſion that has brought us together to celebrate the praiſes of God on this joyful day.

The preſent condition of England does in ſo many inſtances reſemble the antient ſtate of Iſrael, that while I have been diſcourſing of the privileges of the one, I am ſure you could not forget the happineſs of the other. The temperature of our climate, and the fruitfulneſs of our ſoil; our commodious ſituation for trade, the wiſe conſtitution of our government, the good proviſion made by our laws for the preſervation of our liberty and property, and the truth and excellency of our religion, render the compariſon too obvious not to have been made in your own minds.

The indulgence of heaven towards us, in defeating the ſecret plots and open attempts of our enemies, in protecting our country from deſign'd invaſions, and the beſt of our kings from the ſword abroad, as well as from the aſſaſſinating dagger at home, all

[t] Ver. 8, 9. [u] Pſal. 144. 15.

ſhew

ſhew how much we have been the objects of God's peculiar favour.

Without mentioning the many deliverances and victories wherewith God has honoured this nation, ſince reformed from the Romiſh religion, our own memory can furniſh us with an account of the revolution, under the conduct of the late king William, whoſe name will always appear bright in our Engliſh hiſtory, as long as the love of liberty and religion ſhall obtain among us; that liberty which he ſo gloriouſly reſtored, and that religion which he ſo happily ſecured by the favourable providence of God, and which the ſame divine hand has preſerved to us by many remarkable ſucceſſes, and frequent returns of triumph both by ſea and land: eſpecially in the reign of her preſent majeſty, who has received a ſingular honour from heaven on this account.

The never-to-be-forgetten victory of Hochſtet, will ſhine, among the other great actions which adorn her reign, with a peculiar glory, not only in our own annals, but in the hiſtories of other nations. a victory ſo great in itſelf and in its conſequences, that we could ſcarce hope this age would ever ſee any thing like it, till the battle of Ramillies, and the following ſucceſſes, convinced us, that nothing is too great to be expected by us, while God is *the ſhield of our help, and the ſword of our excellency.*

As this wonderful progreſs of our arms, and thoſe of our allies in Flanders, together with the eminent ſucceſs attending the confederate troops in Spain, is the occaſion of our preſent joy and thankſgiving; I think it proper to excite you to the duty of praiſing that God to whom victory belongs, by giving you a brief repreſentation of theſe great actions and their conſequences, which now employ the thoughts, and engage the admiration of all Europe.

You cannot be ignorant, how great and early preparations were made this year, by the French king, to puſh the allies on all ſides with the utmoſt vigor, in hope to retrieve his declining glory, and, as much as poſſible, to wipe off the diſgrace of the battle of Hochſtet. One army lays ſiege to Barcelona, another prepares to inveſt Turin. To favour the firſt deſign, the French fleet is ſent with a vaſt quantity of warlike proviſions; and if they had carried this place, it would, in all appearance, have much facilitated their attempt on the other: and I need not tell you of how fatal conſequence their ſucceſs againſt thoſe cities was likely to have been to the confederates in Spain and Savoy, and indeed in all Italy, where they had obtained ſome advantage againſt the German troops. The early advances of the enemy on the Rhine, where they had a numerous army, and the diligence they uſed to aſſemble a vaſt body of their beſt troops

troops in Flanders, to fall on the duke of Marlborough before all his forces had joined him, gave no very favourable aſpect to our affairs, and made our enemies promiſe themſelves certain victory; and what would have been the tragical effects of their triumph, if it had happened according to their expectation, is too obvious to need a particular account.

The French meaſures appeared to be well concerted, but they have been intirely broken by the arm of the Almighty. Barcelona has been very opportunely relieved; the enemy have quitted their camp with ſhame and loſs. The confederate army in Flanders fall on their enemies, inſtead of expecting their attack, and have gain'd a compleat victory; by which the face of affairs thro'out Europe is extremely altered.

How remarkably did the providence of that God, whom winds and waves obey, interpoſe by a ſtorm to retard the French fleet for many days, which prevented them from bringing the neceſſary proviſions for their army before Barcelona; without which delay, in all human probability, that place had been taken, before the Engliſh fleet could have arrived to relieve it! How ſeaſonably this ſuccour came, when the ſiege was conſiderably advanced, and large breaches made in the walls, and the ſmall number of regular troops within not likely to defend it long againſt ſo conſiderable an army as that which in-

veſted it! What a remarkable courage and activity appeared in the young king who defended it, whom no perſuaſions could oblige to retire from the town, which if he had done, 'tis not unreaſonable to ſuppoſe that city would have been ſurrendered before the arrival of our navy!

How much the expeditious march of the earl of Peterborough, and his application to relieve the town, by throwing in what ſuccours he was able, contributed to the ſaving of that city, 'tis eaſy to conjecture; and ſeem no leſs honourable to that general, than the valour and good conduct he before ſhewed in the ſiege of it, by which he ſoon obliged that important place to ſurrender.

The precipitant motion of the French in the night from their camp, after a ſiege of 35 days, in which they are ſaid to have waſted about a fourth part of their army, and the prodigious quantity of warlike ſtores they left behind them, all ſerve to inform us, that they were ſtruck with the greateſt conſternation, being under the terrible apprehenſion of a difficult retreat, as indeed it happened to their conſiderable damage.

All the world ſees the importance of the timely raiſing of this ſiege, the happy conſequences of which daily appear in Spain, and give a fair proſpect of reſtoring that people to their former liberty; beſides the mighty influence it muſt be ſuppoſed to have on the

the affairs of Piedmont and Italy, in favour of the confederacy.

While we were in pain for a place of ſo great conſequence, the divine providence that had in the critical juncture ſecured it from the force of our enemies, before we could hear of its ſafety, happily ſurprized us with the news of the glorious victory at Ramillies: where, tho the French army was much ſuperior in number to that of the allies, and a great part of it conſiſted of the beſt regiments of France, among whom were the troops of the king's houſhold; tho they had the advantage of chuſing their ground, and knew we were not on equal terms with them, the confederate troops not being all join'd; yet they received a mortal blow, the memory of which will deſcend to all ſucceeding ages.

The diſorder and confuſion into which they were put by the courage and vigor of our troops, and the conduct of their generals, the prodigious ſlaughter that was made among them, as well as the great number of priſoners that were taken, among whom were many officers of note, and the large ſpoil left in the field, render the victory very great and ſurpriſing.

But the ſtrange terror which ſeized the enemy in their flight, and made them abandon ſo many ſtrong places, and the ſudden ſubmiſſion of ſo many populous and wealthy cities and towns, make it much more conſiderable

ſiderable. A large and fertile country finds itſelf in an inſtant delivered from the tyrannick yoke of France, notwithſtanding the great number of French gariſons which aw'd them before: and what might have been accounted the work of an age, is performed in the compaſs of a few days.

The multitude of deſerters who have quitted the ſervice of our enemies, and joined themſelves to the confederate army, has not a little weakened the former, and added in proportion to the ſtrength of the latter.

Amidſt theſe aſtoniſhing ſucceſſes, we have great reaſon to own the favour of God in the eminent preſervation of both the Engliſh and Dutch generals. Since the lives of thoſe great men are ſo valuable to the publick, the fall of either of them in the field of battle, might have made a very unhappy impreſſion on the army, and might have diminiſhed, if not fruſtrated, the ſucceſs of that memorable day. However, it would have drawn a veil on the luſtre of this, and leſſened our joy on this occaſion; wherein we adore that kind act of providence which ſo ſignally preſerved them both to ſee the glorious conſequences of the victory then obtain'd.

As the diſtinguiſhed character of the duke of Marlborough, for his knowledge and experience in the art of war, and the great credit he has abroad as well as in his own country,

country, make his preſence neceſſary at the head of the confederate troops; ſo this ſhews us how much reaſon we have to bleſs God for delivering him twice that day from the utmoſt danger, firſt when fallen from his horſe, and then when he was remounting. Which wonderful preſervation of that general, calls to mind the like favourable interpoſition of the divine hand ſeveral times, to divert the ſtroke of death from the late king William of glorious memory, when engaged in battle for us in the ſame cauſe of liberty, which is now again ſo vigorouſly aſſerted by the allies, and ſo happily favoured by the providence of God.

If we regard the conſequences yet reaſonably to be expected from this expeditious progreſs of our arms, the proſpect may advance our hope to a pitch equal to that to which our admiration is raiſed by what is already done.

Theſe operations, as great and extenſive as they appear, are effected ſo early in the year; victory, and the encouragements which attend it, have inſpired the conquering troops with ſo much reſolution and intrepidity; and the defeated and broken army of France is ſo ſtrangely terrified, that, as the latter ſeem uncapable of attempting any great matter, till time has worn off the impreſſion of that terror which has ſeized them, and rallied their diſſipated ſpirits; ſo it may well be ſuppoſed the former will

will hardly think any enterprize too great, or any difficulty inſuperable; while they are intirely ſatisfied in the conduct of their generals, and find the hand of the Almighty engaged on their ſide.

And here I can't forbear to obſerve, that on this occaſion, as well as formerly, it has pleaſed God principally to honour the proteſtant troops in the confederacy: as if the deſign of providence was hereby to ſoften the minds of the Romaniſts, in favour of thoſe againſt whom they had conceived an inveterate averſion; ſince they can't be inſenſible, that they chiefly owe the preſervation and reſtitution of their liberty, and whatever elſe is valuable to them in the world, to thoſe whom they have been taught to call hereticks. Who knows how far the obligations they find themſelves under to the proteſtant princes, and their forces, may abate their bigotry, and diminiſh their prejudices, and diſpoſe them to inquire into the reaſon of the religion of thoſe, who concur ſo well with them in the cauſe of civil liberty?

Nor may I omit to remark, that the pious method her majeſty has taken to open each campaign with publick prayers, has received a ſignal approbation from heaven by the many wonderful ſucceſſes, which have given us ſo joyful opportunities as this to celebrate the divine praiſes. And the appointment of a national thankſgiving for

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ſuch eminent bleſſings, is no leſs an argument of the queen's piety, and has met with an uncommon reward, as an encouragement both to her majeſty and her people, conſtantly to recommend the juſt cauſe wherein they are engaged to the conduct of that righteous and merciful God to whom victory belongs.

We are moreover to remember how good a foundation was laid by the providence of God for an effectual oppoſition to the efforts of our enemies, by inclining the parliament to that union and moderation, ſo frequently recommended by her majeſty, which diſpoſed them to an unanimous and early application to the publick buſineſs, that a timely proviſion might be made of the neceſſary ſupplies for carrying on the war with vigor.

The more extenſive the good conſequences of our triumphs are, with the more joy they ought to inſpire the heart of every good man, who muſt needs be pleaſed with what he ſees conducive to the happineſs of mankind in general: but the large ſhare this nation has in both the honour and advantages of theſe victories, is evident to every one of us, who values his liberty, and the free exerciſe of his religion.

Is it neceſſary I ſhould remind you of the danger we have formerly been in of loſing both, and how much blood and treaſure has been expended for their ſecurity? Are there not inſtances enough in the world of the miſeries

miſeries of thoſe people, who have been ſo unhappy as to fall under a tyrannnick power, particularly that of France?

Are not many thouſands of the natives of that country, who are ſcattered thro' the world by a cruel perſecution, and expoſed to variety of hardſhips in foreign nations, ſo many living witneſſes of the ſavage treatment we muſt have expected, if God had ſuffered the ambitious and bloody deſigns of that prince to ſucceed? Has not the cruelty he has exerciſed on prodigious numbers of his own people, by the confiſcation of their eſtates, by raviſhing their children from their arms, by the confinement of their perſons in the moſt loathſome priſons, by breaking them on the wheel, by chaining them in gallies, there condemned to perpetual ſlavery; in a word, by making them ſuffer the moſt barbarous methods of torture that could be invented: has not this cruelty, I ſay, which renders the reign of that king ſo infamous, given us a juſt ſenſe and reliſh of the great mercy of God, which has preſerved us from falling a prey to his deſpotick power?

I hope it will not be thought that the mention of this inhuman treatment of our fellow-chriſtians, which is apt to make nature recoil, and inſpire men, who are not cruel or ſtupid, with trouble and horror, is now unſeaſonable; and that it draws a cloud on the luſtre of this bright and chear-

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ful day, which is devoted to joy and thankſgiving: for the terrible idea of the miſery of thoſe who live where arbitrary power obtains, ought to enliven our joys and increaſe our thankfulneſs to the divine majeſty, who has preſerved us from thoſe fiery trials which once threatened us, and made us triumph over the enemies of his church.

Nor ſhould we forget our ſuffering brethren at ſuch a time as this; ſince the remembrance of their afflictions is proper to put us in mind of the demerit of our own ſins, which might have long ſince expoſed us to the ſame calamities, if the mercy of God had not prevented. And as our ſympathy with thoſe who ſtill ſuffer theſe cruelties, is an obligation laid on us by our holy religion; ſo 'tis likely to ſet an edge on our devotion, and to render our prayers more fervent, when we addreſs ourſelves to God for the deliverance of thoſe who are perſecuted for righteouſneſs-ſake.

And 'tis not to be doubted, that while thoſe good people groan under tyranny and perſecution, it is ſome relief to their drooping ſpirits, ſome alleviation of their ſufferings, to hear of the repeated victories obtained over their perſecutors, of the eſtabliſhment of the true religion, and the revival of liberty in other countries, which may give them a hopeful proſpect of the reſtoration of the ſame bleſſings to themſelves. Thus, ſince the apoſtle directs us to

rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep; as they partake of our joy, we ſhould, by our chriſtian commiſeration, ſhare in their ſorrow.

And is there not a juſt ground of hope, that the honour God has done the proteſtant princes and ſtates, in giving their arms ſuch extraordinary ſucceſs, is in order to give them one day an opportunity of expreſſing their gratitude to heaven, by reeſtabliſhing the proteſtant religion in thoſe countries from whence it has been extirpated, by the moſt barbarous and perfidious methods, contrary to all law and juſtice, the moſt ſolemn oaths and ſacred treaties? And who knows whether a work ſo juſt, ſo charitable, ſo pious, and every way ſo glorious, is not reſerved for the reign of queen Anne; whoſe forces both by ſea and land have had ſo great a hand in the mortification of that grand enemy of our religion, and of the liberty of mankind?

And now what ſhall we render to the Lord for all his benefits? If we have any ſenſe of religion, gratitude, or ingenuity, the ſervice of this day, which is to offer the ſacrifice of praiſe and thankſgiving, will be as agreeable to us, as it is juſt and reaſonable in itſelf.

God has been pleaſed to maintain the righteous cauſe in which we are engaged, and not only to defend us from the inſults of

of our enemies, but to punish their treachery and ambition, by making them fall before us in the field. Hereby he has preserved to us the enjoyment of whatever is justly valuable among men: hereby he has secured her majesty's throne and the protestant succession, and confirmed our hope of transmitting our holy religion and civil liberty to our posterity, notwithstanding the pretences and attempts which have been made to deprive us both of the one and of the other. How highly should we esteem those blessings, which have been endeared to us by so many wonderful turns of providence employed for their preservation! What a warm and lasting impression ought so many signal instances of the divine favour to make on all our minds! especially when we consider how unworthy of the least of all God's mercies our sins have rendered us, and how justly he might have punished us, by delivering us into the hands of those enemies, whose tender mercies are cruelty. Since he has not been *extreme to mark our iniquities*, but chuses *by his goodness to lead us to repentance*; since he has encouraged the efforts which have been made by our governors and others for a general reformation of manners, by these extraordinary successes of our arms, methinks it is a sufficient indication to us, that if good men of all ranks and characters among us were so wise and happy as to use their utmost endeavours

to advance that glorious work, we might expect to ſee *yet greater things than theſe. O that they were wiſe, that they underſtood this, that they would conſider their latter end! How ſhould one chaſe a thouſand, and two put ten thouſand to flight* [v], &c.

But how great an unhappineſs would it be, if thoſe who have in ſo many reſpects been made by the indulgence of God to reſemble the Iſraelites, his once peculiar people, ſhould make themſelves like them too in that ingratitude and folly, by which they too often interrupted the courſe of God's bleſſings, and incurred his ſevere diſpleaſure. God forbid! that any of us ſhould imitate that ungrateful people in the degeneracy of their manners; in their neglect of the eſſentials of religion, while they furiouſly contended for the minuteſt circumſtances of it, and ſometimes for things which had no juſt relation to it; and in their factious and inconſtant temper, which made them uneaſy under the happieſt government, and murmur at the beſt of governors. For if we ſhould imitate their ſins, what reaſon have we to promiſe ourſelves impunity, any more than they; who, by their folly, became at laſt as remarkable examples of God's extraordinary judgments, as they once were of his peculiar favours? After all the great things God has done for us, may we never give him

[v] Deut. 32. 29, 30.

occaſion

occaſion to upbraid us as he did that people: *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh nation? Is not he thy father, who hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee, and eſtabliſhed thee* [w]? And to complain of us, as he did of them: *They are a nation void of counſel, neither is there underſtanding in them* [x].

Let us beware, leſt after having *ſung the praiſes* of God, *we forget his works*, and *refuſe to wait for his counſel* [y]. Let not our thankſgiving evaporate into pride and levity, or ſink into intemperance and luxury; but let it appear in a rational and religious joy, accompanied with an humble acknowledgment, that we owe all the ſucceſſes we now celebrate to the *ſhield and ſword of the Lord*; that 'tis *thro' him* that our troops *have done valiantly*, and that *it is he who hath trodden down our enemies* [z]. Let us always depend on his almighty power, and the wiſe conduct of his providence. While *ſome truſt in chariots, and ſome in horſes*, let us ſtill *remember the name of the Lord our God* [a]. Let our prayers, which he has ſo often anſwered, be conſtantly addreſſed to him, for the accompliſhment of that great work of reſtoring liberty to Europe, which has been advanced to ſo good a degree by his ſpecial providence; and for the proſperous and flouriſhing ſtate of the church of God thro'out the world.

[w] Deut. 32. 6.
[x] Ver. 28.
[y] Pſal. 106. 12, 13.
[z] Pſal. 60. 12.
[a] Pſal. 20. 7.

Let us ſhew ourſelves grateful to God, in giving all due honour to thoſe illuſtrious perſons whom he has chiefly employed to mortify the pride and inſolence of our enemies, and to ſecure us from their power. Let our ingenuous and juſt acknowledgment of their merit, ſhew we are very far from envying them the glory of their prudence and valour: nor are we to forget how much we owe to the reſolution and courage of the forces under their command, who have ſo often hazarded their lives for our ſafety.

Let us bleſs God for the great favour he has ſhown us, in placing her majeſty on the throne of theſe kingdoms, under whoſe happy government we enjoy ſo many peculiar bleſſings. Let the eminent reward of her virtues, by the victories that God has given her, incite us to the imitation of her royal example. Let us continually pray for the happineſs and proſperity of her perſon and government, and contribute all we can to the ſupport of her throne.

To conclude: If our hearts were generally ſo affected with the triumphs God has given us, as to engage us to declare and maintain an irreconcileable war againſt our ſins, we might reaſonably hope, that as our enemies have been already *found liars*, both on the account of their fraud and treachery, and in regard of their vain-glory and boaſting; ſo we ſhall be bleſt with repeated victories, till we ſhall ſee peace and *righteouſneſs*

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the ſtability of our times; and that it ſhall ſtill be ſaid of England as it was of Iſrael: *Happy art thou, O England! who is like unto thee, O people, ſaved by the Lord! the ſhield of thy help, and who is the ſword of thy excellency. And thine enemies ſhall be found liars unto thee; and thou ſhalt tread upon their high places.*

A ſermon preach'd on the 1ſt of *May*, 1707. being the day appointed for a publick thankſgiving for the happy union of *England* and *Scotland*.

SERMON VII.

Judges V. latter part of the 15th verſe.

—*For the diviſions of Reuben, there were great thoughts of heart.*

AS this day is devoted to ſolemn joy and thankſgiving for the commencement of the union of the two kingdoms of Great Britain; it ſeems no leſs proper and ſeaſonable to reflect on the miſchief and danger of diviſion, than to look forward to the happy conſequences to be expected from a well-concerted union: for both theſe views are neceſſary to make us comprehend how much we owe, firſt to the divine providence,

and then to the good conduct of the government under which we live, for giving us this occasion of publick rejoicing, and consequently to dispose us to obey the call of both, in the performance of the duties of praise and gratitude after a becoming manner.

The text I have chosen for this purpose, is a passage of the song which Deborah composed, on occasion of the wonderful success of her arms against the Canaanites.

Whilst she applauds the vigor and courage of some of the tribes in the defence of their common liberty, she can't forbear to take notice of the great danger to which the state of Israel was exposed by those divisions, that made others of them less concerned for the publick interest, and less capable of serving it. For after having said, *Out of Ephraim was there a root of them against Amalek, after thee Benjamin among thy people; out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer: and the princes of Issachar were with Deborah, even Issachar; and also Barak, he was sent on foot into the valley:* she adds, *For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart* [b]. *Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flock? for the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart* [c]. *Gilead abode beyond Jordan,*

[b] Ver. 14, 15. | [c] Ver. 16.

and why did Dan remain in ſhips? Aſher continued on the ſea-ſhore, and abode in his breaches. Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death [d].— Tho theſe Reubenites were not the only tribe who were hindered by their diviſions from an equal ſhare both in the ſervice and honour of that glorious day, celebrated in this triumphant ſong; yet their negligence and coldneſs in the cauſe of liberty, conſidering the advantages they were under, are particularly remarked by this princeſs. Not that all the Iſraelites on the other ſide Jordan were negligent of the common ſafety, *for out of Machir came down governors*; that is, from among the Manaſſites, who inhabited Gilead, came ſome of the heads of families, and joined their troops to thoſe of the other tribes. Nor were all on this ſide Jordan ſo well-affected to the government of Deborah, and to the glorious cauſe in which ſhe was engaged, as to aſſiſt her, on this emergency, with a zeal becoming the occaſion: for which ſhe mildly reproves them, when ſhe complains, *Why did Dan remain in ſhips? Aſher continued on the ſea-ſhore*, &c.

But theſe ſupine or diſaffected perſons laſt mentioned, that inhabited ſome parts of Canaan, ſeem not ſo formidable either for their number or power as thoſe beyond Jordan; and therefore this wiſe princeſs reflects on

[d] Ver. 17.

their

their diviſions with a repeated emphaſis, as that which had extremely affected both her and thoſe Iſraelites, who had heartily joined in the expedition againſt king Jabin: *For the diviſions of Reuben*, ſays ſhe, *there were great thoughts of heart.*

From which words I ſhall take occaſion to inquire,

I. What were theſe diviſions of Reuben.
II. What is ſignified by the great thoughts of heart concerning them.

I. What were theſe diviſions of Reuben. Some think the people of this tribe were ſo divided among themſelves, by the difference of their opinions concerning the preſent juncture of affairs, that they could come to no fix'd reſolution of falling into thoſe good meaſures which were taken by the greateſt part of the tribes for the recovery of their liberty, and for their future ſecurity from tyranny and oppreſſion: that tho they had a zeal equal to that of the other tribes for the general intereſt of Iſrael, in which their own welfare was involv'd; yet their inteſtine animoſities and diſputes made them too regardleſs of the common danger, and deprived them of an opportunity of ſignalizing their valour, equally with their brethren, againſt the great enemy of their country.

Others

Others think the diviſions of Reuben, in the text, ſignify, that this tribe, tho united among themſelves, yet was making a ſeparate intereſt from the reſt; and that this unhappy diviſion prevented them from ſending their quota of auxiliary troops againſt the Canaanitiſh king, on the occaſion of that glorious expedition of Deborah and Barak, which this ſong commemorates.

Neither of theſe interpretations is improbable, and I ſee no reaſon why they may not very well conſiſt together: that they were in ſome ſort divided in their ſentiments and conduct from the reſt of the tribes, appears by the complaint the propheteſs makes of their *abiding in ſheep-folds*, when they ſhould have been in their tents; and of their contenting themſelves *to hear the bleatings of their flocks*, when they ought to have attended the call of the trumpet. And 'tis not unlikely that they were divided among themſelves on this occaſion, ſince 'tis hard to imagine that any miſunderſtanding ſhould ſo far prejudice that numerous and warlike tribe againſt their brethren, as to make them all intirely negligent of their own intereſt; and that they ſhould all carry their reſentments ſo high, whatever offence they had taken, as to chuſe rather to expoſe themſelves to the utmoſt danger, than to ſhare the honour and advantage of a victory over the common enemy. 'Tis ſcarce to be doubted, that a great number of

of the Reubenites were in as good a disposition as the rest of the tribes to make a campaign with Deborah and Barak, in the defence of Israel; but their want of unanimity, and the feuds and animosities which may be supposed to have happened among them on this account, could not be so speedily extinguished, as to put them into a capacity of sending any considerable body of troops to the army.

What was the occasion of the discontent of the Reubenites, cannot easily be determined; whether they were not so early consulted, and their aid so particularly importuned in this war as they expected, as seems probable in that the troops of Naphtali and Zebulun were first assembled, and that this occasioned a murmuring among them, like that which afterwards happened among the Ephraimites against Gideon: *Why hast thou served us thus*, say they, *that thou didst not call us when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And*, as the holy text adds, *they chid him sharply* [e]: and as they afterwards contended with Jephtha, on a like occasion, in very severe terms; *Wherefore didst thou pass over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? We will burn thy house upon thee with fire* [f]; which controversy rose to that height that it could not be decided without a bat-

[e] Judg. 8. 1.

[f] Judg. 12. 1, 2, 3, 4, &c.

tle:

tle: or whether they ſuppoſed the enterprize of Deborah in making war with Jabin was too hazardous an undertaking, and if it ſhould prove unſucceſsful, likely to increaſe their miſery; as the men of Succoth, with yet greater precaution, refuſed to furniſh proviſion for the troops of Gideon, when in purſuit of the Midianites, leſt theſe ſhould rally again, and the courſe of victory ſhould turn: as ſeems plain from their words, *Are the hands of Zeba and Zalmunna*, i. e. the kings of Midian, *now in thy hands, that we ſhould give bread to thy army?* Whether, I ſay, they were uneaſy on either of theſe accounts, I ſhall not determine. 'Tis not improbable the tribe of Reuben thought that deference and reſpect was not given them which belong'd to the eldeſt tribe; and how well ſoever they were ſatisfied at preſent with the unexceptionable government of Deborah, yet were apprehenſive they might be leſs under a future governor, and therefore were reſolv'd, upon her demiſe, to ſet up one of their own chuſing: and already began to ſhew a diffidence of their brethren, not caring to be concern'd with them in any publick affairs. And perhaps their ſituation on the other ſide the river, gave riſe to ſome differences about trade and commerce, which making their intereſt often interfere with that of the other tribes, proved a hinderance to their familiar converſation; and ſo their want of a good correſpondence, might revive

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that jealouſy in their minds which they formerly conceived, when they, with the Gadites, and part of the tribe of Manaſſeh, returned to their poſſeſſions, after the conqueſt of Canaan, and the ſettlement of the reſt of the tribes in that country; and which made them fear they ſhould be treated not only as if they were a diſtinct nation, but as if they profeſſed a different religion: to prevent which, they erected an altar on the borders of Canaan, as a ſtanding teſtimony that they were true Iſraelites, as they declare to the reſt of the tribes, when they took umbrage at that monument. —*In time to come*, ſay they, *your children might ſpeak unto our children, ſaying, What have you to do with the Lord God of Iſrael? for the Lord hath made Jordan a border between us and you; ye children of Reuben, and children of Gad, ye have no part in the Lord: ſo ſhall your children make our children ceaſe from fearing the Lord. Therefore we ſaid, Let us now prepare to build us an altar; not for burnt-offering, nor for ſacrifice, but that it may be a witneſs between us and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the ſervice of the Lord before him with our burnt-offerings, and with our ſacrifices, and with our peace-offerings: that your children may not ſay unto our children in time to come, Ye have no part in the Lord* [g]. It is not unlikely, I ſay, that that there was a re-

[g] Joſh. 22. 24, *&c.*

vival

vival of this former jealouſy in the Reubenites, and that they thought the tribes on the other ſide Jordan ſcarce look'd on them as true Iſraelites, but as a nation divided from them by their intereſt and opinions, as well as ſituation; and were uneaſy that a propheteſs of mount Ephraim ſhould govern them [h], ſince this made them with regret remember the tranſlation of the birthright from them to the ſons of Joſeph, as the government was afterwards transferred to Judah: for thus the words of Jacob to Reuben, *Gen.* 49. 4. that *he ſhould not excel*, are explained, 1 *Chron.* 5. 1, 2. *For he*, i. e. *Reuben, was the firſt-born: but foraſmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the ſons of Joſeph, the ſon of Iſrael; and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joſeph's.* It cannot be thought this could be eaſily borne, and therefore they might conclude it would be moſt expedient to aſſert their antient ſovereignty over the other tribes, or at leaſt declare themſelves intirely independent on them. But after all, whether this, or any other of the things above-mentioned, occaſioned the diviſions of Reuben ſpoken of in this paſſage of Deborah's ſong, the brevity of that hiſtory will not permit us certainly to reſolve; and

[h] Judg. 4. 5.

there-

therefore we muſt content ourſelves with ſuch conjectures as appear to have the greateſt probability. I ſhall therefore proceed,

II. To conſider what is ſignified by the great thoughts of heart occaſioned by this diviſion.

We may be ſure all thoſe Iſraelites who had a true reliſh of liberty, and a ſincere love to their religion, were not a little concerned at the diviſions of Reuben, and that both before and after the conqueſt of the Canaanitiſh army: for the original will equally bear the words to be rendered, *For the diviſions of Reuben there were*, or there are, *great thoughts of heart*. And 'tis not to be doubted that Deborah, who had nothing ſo much at heart as the welfare of all her people, was extremely thoughtful of the evil conſequences which might attend theſe breaches, and very ſolicitous of finding means to repair them.

The greatneſs of her conqueſt over the nations of Canaan, can't make her forget the unreaſonable factions of the tribes of Iſrael. The diviſions of Reuben ſeem to abate the joy of victory, and now and then force a ſigh from her, even in the midſt of her triumphant ſong: *For the diviſions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart*; and again, *For the diviſions of Reuben great ſearchings of heart*: expreſſions which ſufficiently declare the temper of the generous ſoul of that *mother in Iſrael*,

Iſrael, who could not think herſelf happy in her government, till her triumphs abroad were crown'd with union at home.

There is indeed a different turn given to theſe words by interpreters; ſome render them, *In the diviſions of Reuben were great men, and wiſe in heart*, or, *of a reſolv'd mind.* So they ſeem to repreſent that parental compaſſion with which Deborah laments their diviſions, ſince they had among them men no leſs famous for their knowledge and wiſdom, than for their courage and reſolution; and therefore as capable of ſerving the publick in places of truſt and honour as the reſt of the tribes, if their differences could once be healed by a happy coalition. Others interpret the words, *At the diviſions of Reuben, even of the great men, were great thoughts of heart*; that is, at the diviſions which were among the nobles, the ſtateſmen, magiſtrates, and the heads of families, who made different parties, and divided the common people: or, *For the diviſions of Reuben the great men had thoughts of heart*; and ſo the text may repreſent the application of mind with which the greateſt men in Iſrael inquired into the true cauſes of the diviſions of Reuben, when they perceived the dangers likely to enſue upon them, and with which they conſulted a method of union for rectifying the preſent diſorders, and preventing future miſchief, not without the earneſt recommendation, and poſſibly the ſpecial commiſſion

of

of this wife and religious princefs; who, by the fuccefs of her arms, as well as by the clemency and moderation of her government, was become equally the joy of her people and the terror of her enemies, and much more capable of difpofing the minds of the Ifraelites to union and a good correfpondence, than a lefs gracious and wife governor could be.

But feeing thefe thoughts of heart, both of Deborah and the nobles of Ifrael, or thofe reafonings and debates, as fome turn the word, which were among them, feem plainly to import the great danger they apprehended from divifion, the good effects to be expected from a firm union, and alfo the great difficulty of bringing it about; all which might well engage their thoughts, and caufe great conſultations among them: I fhall conſider,

1. The danger of the divifions of Reuben.

2. The good conſequences to be hop'd from their union with the reft of the tribes. And,

3. The difficulty of accompliſhing this work.

Which, as I faid before, might juſtly occaſion great thoughts of heart in Deborah, in all the men of ſenſe and probity under her government; and particularly in the great men who were her chief counſellors, and beſt qualified for the higheſt employments in that nation.

The firſt thing which falls under our conſideration, is the danger of the diviſions of Reuben; which will appear very great, when we conſider, that beſides the common diſadvantages of contention and diviſion, by which men of differing parties are deprived of thoſe good offices which they mutually owe each other, nothing is more frequently to be obſerved, than that the averſion which ariſes from the ſtrife of contending communities, is eaſily fomented and increaſed: ſo that the difficulty of extinguiſhing it grows in proportion to the time of its continuance. The circumſtances of Iſrael at this time rendered the danger ſo much the more terrible, in that the tribes had been long groaning under tyranny; and one would have thought ſhould have learn'd ſo much moderation and prudence as to ſuſpend their leſſer quarrels, at leaſt while they were companions in miſery, and bowing under the yoke of a common oppreſſor; that they ſhould have ſacrificed their civil controverſies to the publick welfare, and united all their forces to recover their antient liberty, and to ſecure to themſelves the free exerciſe of their religion. How great was the risk they ran on this occaſion, who rather choſe to maintain their unreaſonable diviſions, than with united ſtrength to attempt the ſtopping of that inundation of miſery which threatened them all with equal ruin! The ſtrength and number of king Jabin's

army, who had 900 chariots of iron, when the Iſraelites were far from a good poſture of defence, ſince, by the teſtimony of Deborah, a ſhield or ſpear were ſcarce ſeen among 40000 in Iſrael [i]; ought to have excited theſe to unanimity, as almoſt the only means left them to regain their liberty: and yet unhappily the breach continued during that hazardous war.

Nor did the danger vaniſh immediately after the overthrow of the Canaanitiſh forces; for it was not impoſſible that the tribes might uſe the ſame vigor in deſtroying each other, which they had before employed in vanquiſhing their enemies: and Deborah might well foreſee that glorious victory ſhe had obtained, and the conſequent time of peace and tranquillity the nation had in view, would be ſo far from making them happy while their civil broils continued, that it might rather give them opportunity to ſheathe their ſwords in the bowels of each other, if not timely prevented by ſome prudent method to re-unite them.

And who can recount the miſeries which might have befallen Iſrael, if their diviſions had continued, and broke out into a civil war? What a hinderance would this have been to their commerce? what a devaſtation muſt have enſued on their frontiers? what a conſiderable part of their land muſt

[i] Judg. 5. 8.

have lain uncultivated? And what frequent alarms on either ſide, what deſolating excurſions, what ſpoil and ravage, what cruelty and ſlaughter would have been the conſequence of the continuance of this diviſion, may be learn'd from that dreadful civil war which happen'd between the Benjamites and the reſt of the Iſraelites, by which a tribe was likely to have been cut off from Iſrael [k]; and by the wars between the two and the ten tribes at ſeveral times, after the fatal breach occaſioned by the tyranny and ſtupidity of Rehoboam.

That which made their divided ſtate threaten yet greater calamities, was, that the weakneſs of either party would prompt them to call in the aid of foreign princes, as it happened to the kings of Iſrael and Judah; and then 'tis eaſy to gueſs what a direct courſe was taken even by the conquering party to become an eaſy prey to their heathen confederates.

However, ſince they were ſurrounded with ill neighbours, thoſe pagans whom, by the divine appointment, they had diſpoſſeſſed of one of the moſt fertile and agreeable countries in the world; it muſt needs appear very dangerous for them to be diſunited among themſelves, ſince this might give occaſion to their inveterate enemies to attack them with ſucceſs, to ſeize their inheritan-

[k] Judg. 20. and chap. 21. 6.

ces,

ces, and carry them and their families into captivity, or at leaſt to reduce them to a ſtate of ſlavery, and make them tributaries in their own country.

The danger of diviſion among the tribes, not only affected their civil, but their religious ſtate: for religion is not likely to proſper, where charity, the principal glory and beauty of it, is violated, and the very bond of perfection broken. What a ſcandal muſt the contentions of Iſrael have been to their heathen neighbours! and what a temptation to one party, at leaſt, of the Iſraelites themſelves, to apoſtatize to idolatry, in complaiſance to their pagan confederates, thereby to ſecure their aſſiſtance againſt their brethren; and to baniſh from the minds of the people a deſire of viſiting the ſanctuary of God at the ſolemn anniverſary feaſts, when all the males were obliged to worſhip there! And the ſacred hiſtory aſſures us, this was the effect of that famous diviſion of the ten tribes from the two in the time of Jeroboam.

When we moreover conſider that the Gadites and Manaſſites, who had their portion of land with the Reubenites on the other ſide Jordan, were, in all appearance, engaged in the ſame intereſt with them, and that at leaſt many of them were of their party; this diviſion ſeems yet more terrible: for that they were a numerous and warlike people, appears by what is related of them

on the occaſion of a battle in which they conquered the Hagarites: *The ſons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manaſſeh, of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and ſword, and to ſhoot with bow, and skilful in war, were* 44760 *that went out to war* [1]. And their popular pretence to ſovereignty, by their antient claim of birthright, might be ſuppoſed capable of drawing many weak and diſaffected people even of other tribes to their party.

Well might ſuch a diviſion as this appear formidable to Deborah, and the elders of Iſrael; and make them think it worthy their beſt thoughts and greateſt application to provide a timely remedy againſt this growing diſtemper, leſt after the conqueſt of their enemies, the Iſraelites ſhould *deſtroy themſelves for lack of knowledge*.

2. As the danger and miſchief of diviſion muſt have given Deborah, and the wiſeſt and beſt of her people, many careful and uneaſy thoughts, and muſt have made them very ſollicitous to engage the divided tribes to coaleſce; ſo the proſpect of the bleſſings of peace and union could not fail to excite them ſtrictly to apply their care and thoughts, in concerting and accompliſhing ſo good and ſo glorious a deſign.

And here I can't better repreſent to you the great advantages which would certainly

[1] 1 Chron. 5. 18.

have

have accrued to Iſrael by union, than by deſiring you to reflect on the miſeries, already expreſſed, which muſt have attended their diſcord and diviſion: for nothing can give you a more lively idea of the bleſſings of peace, than a genuine deſcription of the calamities of war, if you make but this one reflection, That the latter is the very reverſe of the former.

Deborah, and her ſenators, might well account the reconciliation of the tribes worthy their greateſt care and deliberation; becauſe they well knew the happy conſequences which would attend that union: that when *peace* was *within the walls of Iſrael, proſperity* would be *in their palaces:* that this would give them credit and eſteem in foreign nations, and render them formidable to their enemies, who would be forced to acknowledge their wiſdom, and the great favours of the divine providence towards them, in ſuch terms as theſe: *Surely this great nation is a wiſe and underſtanding people; for what nation is there ſo great, who have God ſo nigh unto them* [m]*?* &c. That this would ſecure their borders from the invaſions of the idolatrous nations which ſurrounded them, who watched for opportunities of ſowing diſcord among theſe brethren, and of ſurpriſing them with their armies, when divided: that this would en-

[m] Deut. 4. 7.

gage the protection of that God whom they worſhipped; ſo that what the pſalmiſt ſpeaks of Sion, would be true of the Iſraelitiſh nation in general: *God is known in her palaces for a refuge. For lo, the kings were aſſembled, they paſſed by together. They ſaw it, and ſo they marvelled; they were troubled, and haſted away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain as of a woman in travail* [n]. *Let mount Sion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, becauſe of thy judgments. Walk about Sion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, conſider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death* [o].

Deborah and her nobles might well foreſee that this union among the tribes would ſoon make the nation recover its antient vigor and grandeur, after a tedious ſervitude under the tyrant of Canaan, and the large expences of the late war for the recovery of their liberty: That *the high-ways ſhould be no more unoccupied, and the travellers obliged to walk thro' by-ways:* that *the inhabitants of the villages ſhould no more ceaſe, as they had ceaſed in Iſrael, till Deborah aroſe; till ſhe aroſe a mother in Iſrael* [p]. That *they ſhould be delivered from the noiſe of archers in the places of drawing water; and there rehearſe the righteous*

[n] Pſal. 48. 3, 4, 5, 6.
[o] Ver. 11, 12, 13, 14.
[p] Judg. 5. 6, 7.

acts

acts of the Lord, even the righteous acts towards the inhabitants of his villages in Israel: and the people of the Lord should go down to the gates without fear [q]. That art and commerce should flourish among them, and that the Israelites should reap the fruit of their industry, *every one under his vine and fig-tree*, and none to make them afraid. *That their garners should be full, affording all manner of store: that their sheep should bring forth thousands and ten thousands in their streets. That their oxen should be strong to labour: that there should be no breaking in nor going out; no complaining in their streets. Happy is the people that is in such a case: yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord.*

They might, with great pleasure, foresee how much this union would conduce to the advancement of true religion among the tribes; the sum of which is love and charity: *Charity which suffers long, and is kind, and envies not; charity that vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil, rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things* [r]. That now there would be no danger of persecution, when their civil interests would be the same, and all the tribes agreed in the substantials of religion, and that bar-

[q] Ver. 11. [r] 1 Cor. 13. 4——8.

barity

barity and cruelty prevented, of which ſome of the tribes were guilty after their diviſion and apoſtacy in the time of Jeroboam, for idolatry and perſecution uſually go together; when even the prieſts of Dan and Bethel imbrued their hands with the innocent blood of their brethren, who went up to worſhip at Jeruſalem, according to the divine command. Of this cruelty the prophet Hoſea ſeems to complain, when he ſays, *Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity, and is polluted with blood. And as troops of robbers wait for a man, ſo the company of prieſts murder in the way by conſent; for they commit leudneſs* [f]. And again, when he ſays, —*The iniquity of Ephraim was diſcovered, and the wickedneſs of Samaria: for they commit falſhood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers ſpoileth without* [s]. *They made the king glad with their wickedneſs, and the princes with their lies* [t]. Such dreadful conſequences of diviſion as theſe, ſhew of how great importance it was to attempt a union among the tribes, and what a bleſſed proſpect this princeſs and the ſenators of Iſrael might have of putting an effectual bar to perſecution; a ſin contrary to the light of nature, as well as to the precepts of that religion God had revealed to Iſrael; a crime highly provoking to God, and ſcandalous in the account of all mankind, who are not

[f] Hoſ. 6. 8, 9.
[s] Chap. 7. 1.
[t] Ver. 3.

ſo

ſo abandoned to their paſſions as to violate the plaineſt laws of reaſon and humanity.

But while the danger of diviſion, and the good effects of union engaged the thoughts of Deborah and her councils, we can't ſuppoſe that the great difficulties attending this work did not occur to their minds; and, according to the words of our text, *occaſioned great thoughts of heart*, much thought and contrivance, many debates and conſultations: which is the laſt thing that falls under our notice from the text, *viz.*

3. The difficulty of accompliſhing this great work. How hard a matter muſt it be to reconcile contending tribes or nations, when it often proves ſo difficult to unite two contending perſons! The wiſeſt of men obſerves, that *a brother offended is harder to be won than a ſtrong city; and their contentions are like the bars of a caſtle* [u].

Since there is ſuch a variety of tempers, and difference of intereſts among men; ſince they are prone to be led by their paſſions, and biaſs'd by a great number of prejudices, it muſt appear very difficult to make any large communities willing to coaleſce and become one people, eſpecially when their fears and ſuſpicions of each other are riſen to a great height. For in national differences there are ſeldom wanting thoſe crafty

[u] Prov. 18. 19.

incen-

incendiaries, who know how to aggravate offences, heighten jealouſies, miſrepreſent the words and actions of men in publick employments; by theſe means to augment the flame, tho ſometimes under the pretence of attempting to extinguiſh it. And 'tis not to be imagin'd there were none of this character among the tribes of Judah, in the time of Deborah.

There are uſually, in affairs of this nature, ſo many demands and claims made on either ſide, ſo many men of influence to be ſatisfied, ſo many popular pretenſions to be anſwered, ſo many precautions to be taken, ſo many inconveniences to be prevented, and ſo many niceties to be adjuſted, that to make a union of this kind feaſible at preſent, and durable in time to come, a prince had need have David's character, *To be wiſe as an angel of God*, in order to effect it.

On theſe accounts the diviſions of Reuben ſeem'd to require the counſel of a propheteſs, and the matureſt thoughts of the Sanhedrim of Iſrael. Her extraordinary piety could not but prompt her to attempt a thing ſo much for the honour of religion, and for the publick welfare: her tender care of all the tribes, as ſhe was their governor and a mother in Iſrael, made her reflect on their diſorders with compaſſion, and earneſtly deſire to redreſs them.

Tho

Tho the enterprize was great and difficult, and perhaps formerly attempted in vain; yet the ſurpriſing ſucceſs of her troops in the field, and her equal adminiſtration at home; the mildneſs of her government, as well as the terror of her arms, might well give her hopes of ſucceeding. The wiſdom and moderation of her conduct towards all her people, when ſhe ſat on the throne of judgment, and the glorious victories ſhe obtain'd in the field of battle, gave her the hearts of the Iſraelites, and made a re-union of the tribes appear not altogether impracticable. Her great wiſdom could not fail to direct her to imploy proper hands on ſo critical an occaſion, and her great piety conſtantly to implore the bleſſing of heaven for the accompliſhment of ſo juſt, ſo generous, and ſo charitable a deſign; and the prayer of a propheteſs, and on ſuch an occaſion, was not likely to want a favourable anſwer.

Yet whether this princeſs had the glory of cementing at this time the diviſions of which ſhe complains, we have no expreſs account in the brief hiſtory concerning her government. However, this joyful day gives us occaſion to celebrate the ſucceſs the divine providence has given the queen of Great-Britain, in accompliſhing the union of theſe two kingdoms, which if they had remain'd divided, threatened us with no leſs dangers than thoſe we have before enumerated; and

now

now they are united, give us a no leſs happy proſpect than what we have been taking of the union of the tribes of Iſrael; tho our Britiſh was in danger of being obſtructed by yet greater difficulties than thoſe I have been reciting.

If we ſeriouſly reflect on the critical circumſtances, wherein two different nations in the ſame iſland muſt neceſſarily be, eſpecially if under two diſtinct princes; how hard a matter it would be to maintain a laſting peace, and how eaſy to kindle wars between them: if we conſider how certainly great calamities would attend thoſe wars, and how uncertain the event of them would be; what alliances the weaker ſide might be tempted to affect, and how fatal ſuch meaſures might prove to both nations; we ſhall find we had lately no ſmall occaſion to apprehend that very ſad conſequences would attend the diviſion of England and Scotland, in caſe the latter ſhould chuſe a diſtinct ſovereign from the other, as they might have done after the preſent reign.

The hiſtory of the wars in England during the Saxon heptarchy, thoſe between the houſes of York and Lancaſter, and thoſe between England and Scotland; all ſhew how inconſiſtent it is with the peace and welfare of this iſland to be divided into different kingdoms.

Such a diviſion muſt needs have weakened the proteſtant intereſt both at home and abroad,

abroad, and perhaps in time would have overthrown the ſucceſſion of proteſtant princes to both nations; ſince nothing is more apparent, than that inteſtine quarrels might give opportunity to ſome foreign power to introduce ſlavery and popery into the whole iſland.

Nor are the advantages to be expected from this union leſs obvious, than the dangers we had to apprehend from the continuance of diviſion. Who is it that ſees not how much it conduces to render Great-Britain more conſiderable to its allies, and more formidable to its enemies? that it tends to inſpire all of us, who love our liberty and religion, with thoſe generous principles of charity and moderation, by which the publick peace and ſafety is beſt ſecured, and the honour of our holy religion beſt vindicated? Her majeſty and the parliament of both nations, by concurring in this act of union, have ſufficiently ſignified to the world, that the different ſentiments of proteſtants in matters of religion, are very conſiſtent with their living peaceably together under the ſame government, and being mutually ſerviceable to the publick, according to their ſeveral capacities and ſtations.

What advantages this union gives us againſt both our inteſtine and foreign enemies, 'tis eaſy to diſcern; and we hope a little time will farther explain how much it will ſtrengthen the hands, as well as chear the

the hearts of the reform'd, in other parts of Europe: and who knows how much it may make way for the re-eſtabliſhment of the reformation in thoſe countries, from whence it has been extirpated by all the methods of treachery and violence? By the ſwift and wonderful progreſs of her majeſty's arms abroad, and the ſpeedy accompliſhment of this union at home, the providence of God ſeems to indicate, that there is a harveſt of glory ſtill behind, and yet greater deeds are to adorn her reign, as the reward of her piety and moderation; and to encourage her majeſty to employ her power and intereſt for the relief of thoſe oppreſſed people, who have been perſecuted with the leaſt colour of reaſon, and with the utmoſt rigor in the world.

But I will not undertake to enumerate all the good conſequences to be hoped from this union. If we have but a temper of mind ſuitable to ſo great a bleſſing, there is reaſon to hope that the preſent and future generations will call her bleſſed, who has been the happy inſtrument of effecting it, and that amidſt a thouſand difficulties.

What was endeavoured to no purpoſe in former reigns, and ſo earneſtly recommended by the late king William of glorious memory without effect, has been reſerved for the preſent: the difficulties attending this great work from the private intereſts and piques of great men, from the mixture of religious

religious and civil affairs, from the different views and prejudices of both nations, and from the critical circumſtances of their trade, have been all ſurmounted, and that in a ſhort ſpace of time, by the good providence of that God, who alone can diſpoſe men, under ſuch different circumſtances, to be of one mind; by the prudent conduct of the queen and her councils, and the exact management of her commiſſioners.

Thus while arbitrary princes, who think to make all things yield to their pleaſure by force and violence, have often the mortification of ſeeing their beſt meaſures broken, and their well-laid deſigns prove abortive; thoſe who govern a free and generous people, according to juſt and equal laws, have the ſatisfaction to find their good deſigns proſper, and ſurmount the greateſt difficulties, while they reign in the hearts of their people, and *in all their ways acknowledge* the great *God*, both by their prayers and thankſgivings, *that he may direct their paths.*

As the queen has often paid this homage to the Almighty, and as frequently call'd on her people to join with her in the ſame devout exerciſes; ſo God has, on many occaſions, granted her *her heart's deſire, and not withholden the requeſt of her lips.*

May the ſame good providence, which has given her the chief honour of breaking the chains of Europe, give her alſo the ſa-

tisfaction of ſeeing its liberty intirely ſecured, and its peace reſtored; and the ſame divine hand, that has ſucceeded her in uniting her proteſtant ſubjects at home, make her the glorious inſtrument of re-eſtabliſhing the reform'd religion abroad!

And now what remains, but that we ſhould *bleſs the Lord with all our ſouls, and with all that is within us bleſs his holy name*, for the union of England and Scotland; for the ſecurity he has hereby given us from the dangers we feared, for the hopeful proſpect of the good conſequences we have in view, and which will certainly arrive, if our ſins prevent not, by provoking the Almighty to mingle a perverſe ſpirit among us: for our deſtruction after all this may be from ourſelves, or we may be altogether given up into the hands of our foreign enemies.

God forbid! that we ſhould abuſe ſo great mercies as thoſe we now enjoy, and provoke him to puniſh us after ſo terrible a manner. How much is it to be wiſh'd, that the charitable temper of our minds, and purity of our lives, may recommend the holy religion we profeſs? How much better is it to imitate the generous and chriſtian example of that princeſs, who has ſo often recommended moderation from the throne; and a greater pattern than her's, even that of our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, who *when he was reviled, reviled not again*, than

than to write after the copy of thoſe angry men, who even at this happy conjuncture, which ought to have inſpired them with a diſpoſition of unity and concord, have not feared to tranſgreſs the bounds of decency and juſtice, in traducing the names of their brethren to foreign proteſtants?

Let us be as far from following their maxims, as from imitating their manners; and confute their calumnies by a blameleſs converſation, *that our own conſciences may not reproach us as long as we live* [v]: ſo ſhall their ill-contrived ſlanders, in a little time, be no more credited abroad, than they are regarded at home.

It becomes us rather to mourn over the diviſions and confuſions which are in the world, whereby ſo many of our fellow-creatures are made miſerable, eſpecially to deplore the diviſions among thoſe of the reform'd religion; and each of us, in our ſeveral ſtations, to ſtudy *the things that may make for peace, and thoſe whereby we may edify one another.*

May the union that takes place this day be never diſſolved by our follies and ſins! May Ephraim never more envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim! May England and Scotland be for the future as much one in inclination and affection, as they are obliged to be by their duty and intereſt; that what has been ſolemnly confirmed on earth, may

[v] Job 27. 6.

be ratified in heaven; and that what God has joined together, no man may put aſunder! That this union may be like that of Judah and Iſrael, predicted by Ezekiel: *Thus ſaith the Lord, Behold I will take the children of Iſrael from among the heathen whither they are gone, and will gather them on every ſide, and bring them into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Iſrael; and one king ſhall be king to them all. And they ſhall be no more two nations, neither ſhall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all*[w]:

[w] Ezek. 37. 21, 22.

A ſermon preach'd on *Thurſday* the 17th of *February*, 1708-9. being appointed by her majeſty for a ſolemn thankſgiving to almighty God, for the many and great ſucceſſes of the confederate arms this laſt campaign.

SERMON VIII.

Gen. xiv. 18, 19, 20.

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the prieſt of the moſt high God. And he bleſſed him, and ſaid; Bleſſed be Abram of the moſt high God, poſſeſſor of heaven and earth. And bleſſed be the moſt high God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

THO the wickedneſs of the world before the flood was very great and provoking, yet we have no account of the eſtabliſhment of tyranny, and of war, its fatal attendant, till after the univerſal deluge.

We then ſoon hear of the monarchy of Nimrod, the beginning of whoſe kingdom was Babel; and of the unjuſt incroachments of divers other perſons, whom the deſire of dominion prompted to make a prey of mankind: ſuch were thoſe kings mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, who were intirely defeated by a confederate army under the command of Abram.

The firſt aſſerter of the common liberty, and ſcourge of arbitrary princes, that we read of, was this patriarch; who, as he was ſtyl'd the *friend of God* for his ſingular piety, proved no leſs the friend of men, in breaking the yokes of oppreſſors, and in vindicating the rights of injur'd nations.

This god-like temper of mind well became the *father of the faithful*, who acted as if he would in ſome ſort anticipate the accompliſhment of the promiſe God had made him, that *in him all the families of the earth ſhould be bleſſed* [x]; tho this eſpecially related to the Meſſiah, who was to deſcend from him: for he endeavoured to diffuſe the bleſſing of liberty among mankind, as far as he was capable, by his victorious arms, as well as that of the true religion by his exemplary faith and piety.

As he knew how with patience and reſignation to ſacrifice the moſt tender ſentiments of human nature to the commands of God; and quitting his country, his kin-

[x] Gen. 12. 3.

dred, and his father's houſe, obeyed the heavenly call, tho *he knew not whither he went:* ſo he had the juſtice and charity to expoſe himſelf to the various hazards of war, that he might reſtore thoſe, who groan'd under the burden of ſlavery, to the enjoyment of their antient rights and privileges.

And by the ſame faith which ſupported him under all the inconveniences of a ſtate of pilgrimage, for the ſake of the true religion, he *ſubdued kingdoms, wrought righteouſneſs, and obtained promiſes*[y], even of the greateſt bleſſings, both for himſelf and his poſterity.

'Twas on his return from the ſlaughter of four potent princes, and the total defeat of their armies, that Melchizedek the king of Salem, and prieſt of the moſt high God, met him to congratulate the ſucceſs of his arms; while the holy patriarch aſcribes this complete victory to the arm of the Lord of hoſts, and dedicates a part of the ſpoil to the ſervice of the altar: which is the true import of our text. For it contains,

I. Melchizedek's congratulation; and,
II. Abram's offering.

In the firſt of theſe I ſhall particularly conſider,

(1.) The occaſion of this interview of Melchizedek and Abram.

[y] Heb. 11. 33.

(2.) The character of this great man who congratulated the patriarch.

(3.) The congratulation itſelf.

(1.) As to the occaſion:

It was, as I juſt now remarked, the return of Abram from a very memorable battle, in which he triumphed over four kings, who had a little before ſpread ruin and deſolation thro' the adjacent countries.

The names of theſe princes we have in the beginning of the chapter, *viz.* Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellaſar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations.

The firſt of theſe ſeems to have been a ſucceſſor of Nimrod, who, as the holy ſcripture expreſſes it, *began to be a mighty one in the earth*, that is, attained to great power and dominion: *and was a mighty hunter before the Lord* [z]; which the Targum of Jonathan renders *a rebel before the Lord*; and the Jeruſalem paraphraſt interprets it *a hunter of the ſons of men*, &c. and makes him a cruel perſecutor, who would needs oblige men to forſake the true religion to obey his orders.

This phraſe, *before the Lord*, may ſignify either his open and impudent defiance of the divine authority, as the men of Sodom are ſaid to have been *wicked, and ſinners* before the Lord *exceedingly* [a]; or that God took

[z] Gen. 10. 8. | [a] Gen. 13. 13.

ſpecial

ſpecial notice of the criminal attempts of this arbitrary prince, and highly reſented them: as 'tis ſaid, *The earth was corrupt before God—And God looked upon the earth* [b], that is, with diſpleaſure and anger, as appears by his threatening to deſtroy it, with its inhabitants, in the following words [c]. And it ſeems the cruelty of Nimrod was ſo remarkable and notorious, that it became a proverb, when one would deſcribe a tyrant, to ſay, *Even as Nimrod, the mighty hunter before the Lord* [d].

Some think this prince made uſe of hunting as an occaſion of drawing many active and valiant men to follow him; and that theſe were afterward employed as the inſtruments of his ambitious deſigns, and raiſed to that ſovereignty to which he aſpired: and this is reported as the artifice of Ninus the ſon of Belus, who is ſuppoſed to be the very ſame perſon whom Moſes here calls Nimrod.

The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar [e]. This appears to be the foundation of the Aſſyrian monarchy; for it was *from this land that Aſhur*, to whom Aſſyria owes its name, *went forth and built Nineveh* [f]: and the prophet Micah expreſly calls Aſſyria *the land of Nimrod* [g].

[b] Gen. 6. 11, 12.
[c] Ver. 13.
[d] Gen. 10. 9.
[e] Gen. 10. 10.
[f] Ver. 11.
[g] Mic. 5. 6.

The

The ſecond prince againſt whom Abram made war, was Arioch king of Ellaſar, which ſome take to be Syria, or a part of it; but whether they are in the right or not, I ſhall not pretend to determine.

Chedorlaomer was the third, who is intitled king of Elam, a country thought to be ſo called from one of the ſons of Shem of that name [h], and ſuppoſed by ſome to be Media or Perſia. As this prince was of the poſterity of Shem, and had inſlaved the Canaanites who deſcended from Ham, it ſeems an accompliſhment of that prophecy of Noah, that Canaan ſhould be the ſervant of Shem [i].

The laſt of thoſe princes was Tidal king of nations, which is taken by ſome for the country afterwards called Pamphylia. 'Tis not improbable that this title was given him becauſe of the extent of his dominion, and of the different nations ſubject to him; or becauſe his country was peopled by men of various nations, and made ſuch a mixture of people, as that which afterwards laid the foundation of the Roman ſtate. So 'tis ſuppoſed Galilee is called *Galilee of the Gentiles*, or nations, becauſe a mix'd people inhabited that part of Paleſtina.

Theſe four monarchs, it appears, were confederate; and Chedorlaomer, the chief of this dangerous alliance, had ſo far ex-

[h] Gen. 10. 22. [i] Gen. 9. 27.

tended

tended his exorbitant power, as to ſubjugate five kings with their people, and to make them tributary to him. Their names are recited in the beginning of the chapter, *viz.* Bera king of Sodom, Birſha king of Gomorrah, Shinah king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zebojim; and the king of Bela which is Zoar [k].

After theſe princes had borne the yoke of Chedorlaomer the ſpace of twelve years, they began to give ſome ſigns of life, and to aſpire after their former liberty, and at length had the courage to take up arms againſt the tyrant, who had ſo long oppreſſed them: for the ſacred text tells us, *In the thirteenth year they rebelled* [l]. And they ſhewed ſo much vigor on this occaſion, that he was not able to reduce them till the year following; when this haughty monarch, and his three allies, united their forces, and carried blood and deſolation thro' the neighbouring countries. *In the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, and ſmote the Rephaims in Aſhteroth-Karnaim, and the Zuzims in Ham, and the Emims in Shaveh-Kirjathaim; and the Horites in their mount Seir, unto El-Paran, which is by the wilderneſs. And they returned, and came to En-Miſhpat, which is Kadeſh, and ſmote all the country of the Amalekites, and alſo the Amorites, that dwelt*

[k] Gen. 14. 2. | [l] Ver. 4.

in

in Hazezon-Tamar [m]. Theſe three terms, the Rephaims, Zuzims, and Emims, here mentioned, are, by the Chaldee paraphraſt, interpreted *giants*, *mighty men*, and *terrible*. The firſt of them is elſewhere rendered *giants* in our Engliſh tranſlation [n]. The Zumims are probably the ſame race of giants, who are called Zamzummim by Moſes [o]; who alſo ſays, *The Emims were a people great and many, and tall as the Anakims* [p].

Tho theſe nations were famous for their prodigious ſtature and ſtrength, as well as for the greatneſs of their numbers, they were not able to ſtand the ſhock of the more powerful army of Chedorlaomer and his allies, who, like a rapid inundation, carried all before them.

The five kings who govern'd Sodom, Gomorrah, and the other cities of the plain, with their dependances, took the field with their troops, to ſtem this impetuous tide, which threatened univerſal ruin, to defend their lately recovered liberty, and perhaps to reſtore the ſame bleſſing to their miſerable neighbours.

With theſe hopes they join battle with the four tyrants in the vale of Siddim [q]: but as providence does not always favour the beſt of cauſes with immediate ſucceſs, but often chaſtiſes vicious nations with the

[m] Ver. 5, 6, 7.
[n] Deut. 2. 11.
[o] Ver. 20.
[p] Ver. 10.
[q] Gen. 14. 8, 9, 10, 11.

ſword

ſword of cruel uſurpers; the five unhappy princes are defeated, a great number of their army ſlain, and the reſt put to flight; while the inſulting conquerors pillage their cities, and carry their families into captivity.

Among thoſe who ſuffered by this publick calamity, Lot, the nephew of Abram, was one [r]: this great man, who was no leſs famous for his piety than for his wealth, was firſt plundered, and then led away priſoner by the enemy.

When this unhappy news was brought to Abram, by a perſon who had made his eſcape [f], he was ſenſibly touched with the ſevere affliction that had befallen ſo near a kinſman and ſo good a friend; and it could not but aggravate his trouble, that ſo zealous a worſhipper of the true God ſhould be involved in the common ruin. He was likewiſe moved with a generous compaſſion for thoſe miſerable princes and people, who, when they began to taſte the pleaſure of their lately recover'd liberty, ſoon found themſelves reduced to a worſe ſtate of ſervitude than that they had endured before.

The noble patriarch immediately reſolves on an expedition to relieve them; he gives orders to the troops of his houſhold to arm [s]; and having engaged Mamre, Eſchol, and Aner, who were in alliance with him,

[r] Gen. 13. 5, 6. 2 Pet. 2. 7.
[f] Gen. 14. 12.
[s] Ver. 13, 14.

he marches with the utmoſt diligence in purſuit of the conquerors: and having divided his army in the night [t], in order to attack them with the greater advantage, he ſoon put them to the rout. In this battle the four kings were put to the ſword [u]: and after a vigorous purſuit, to render this glorious action complete, Abram retakes all the priſoners they had carried away, and returns laden with the ſpoil, particularly all that the enemy had lately taken, when they pillaged the cities of the plain.

As he returns from the ſlaughter of Chedorlaomer, and the other kings who were with him; the king of Sodom goes out to meet him, not only to congratulate him on this great victory, but to offer him all the ſpoil he had recovered [v], as a grateful acknowledgment of the obligation both himſelf and his people were under to their great deliverer.

The generous propoſal of the king is yet more generouſly refuſed by the patriarch [w], who took too great a pleaſure in mortifying the pride of tyrants, and in doing right to the injured, to deſire the poſſeſſion of their eſtates as the price of their liberty; and therefore declares himſelf well content to have barely ſubſiſted his own troops at their expence, and to have done juſtice to his confederates, in allowing them ſuch a pro-

[t] Ver. 15, 16.
[u] Gen. 14. 17. Heb. 7. 1.
[v] Gen. 14. 21.
[w] Ver. 22, 23, 24.

portion

portion of the booty as was reaſonable for the ſervice of their auxiliary forces.

Amidſt all the honours which are done him on the account of his triumph, he does not forget to pay homage to that God *to whom victory belongs*, by devoting the tenth part of the ſpoils, as a ſacrifice of thankſgiving, when Melchizedek came to congratulate him on this glorious occaſion.

And this leads me to conſider,

(2.) The character of this eminent perſon. He is deſcribed in the text both by his name *Melchizedek*, and by his dignity, *king of Salem, and prieſt of the moſt high God.*

According to the Chaldee paraphraſt, Salem ſignifies Jeruſalem; and indeed that city is ſo called, *Pſal.* 76. 2. tho ſome others ſuppoſe it to be the ſame with Salim near Ænon, ſpoken of in the goſpel, where John choſe to baptize, *becauſe there was much water* [x].

The author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews obſerves, that his name, Melchizedek, ſignifies *king of righteouſneſs* [y], and that his title, *king of Salem*, may be interpreted *king of peace*; intimating, that this deſcription of him in the holy ſcripture was deſign'd to ſhew that his juſt and peaceful reign rendered him a fit type of Chriſt, who is called *the prince of peace*, and *of the increaſe of whoſe government and peace there ſhall be no*

[x] John 3. 23. [y] Heb. 7. 2.

end:

end: for he ſhall order and eſtabliſh his kingdom with judgment and juſtice for ever [z]. On which place ſome of the Hebrew doctors ſay, the name of the Meſſiah is Salem. This agrees with what the ſame prophet elſewhere expreſſes: *Behold a king ſhall reign in righteouſneſs* [a], &c. And to deſcribe the glory of his kingdom, he afterwards ſays, *The work of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace, and the effect of righteouſneſs, quietneſs, and aſſurance for ever* [b]. And the pſalmiſt elegantly on the ſame ſubject, *Mercy and truth are met together, righteouſneſs and peace have kiſſed each other* [c].

Melchizedek is as well deſcribed by his prieſtly office, as by his royal dignity; for he is ſaid to be *the prieſt of the moſt high God.* In the time of the patriarchs the head of each family exerciſed the function of a prieſt as well as that of a ruler, as we may remark in the hiſtory of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob: and when divers families or tribes united in ſociety, and put themſelves under the conduct of a common head for their preſervation and defence, they ſeem to have thought that none could be more worthy of the honour of the prieſthood than righteous governors; who, while they reſembled God *in doing juſtice and in loving mercy*, could not but be acceptable to him; and would not fail to make fervent interceſſion with God for that people,

[z] Iſa. 9. 6, 7.
[a] Iſa. 32. 1.
[b] Ver. 17.
[c] Pſal. 85. 11.

whoſe

whoſe welfare it was their conſtant care to conſult and promote.

The character of Melchizedek leaves no room to doubt that he was thus qualified for the adminiſtration of the affairs both of church and ſtate, while he alternately diſpenſed juſtice from the throne, and performed the ſacred ſervice of the temple.

Whether he was the firſt inſtance of the conjunction of the regal and prieſtly office in the ſame perſon, is not ſo certain; but 'tis not unlikely, that the example of a perſon of his eminence might introduce this practice into ſeveral other nations: for Ariſtotle aſſures us, that antiently *kings both offered ſacrifices, and had the conduct of war* [d]. So Virgil, ſpeaking of the king at Delos, gives him alſo the title of a prieſt [e]. The antient kings of Rome had the ſame office, and the emperors were ſtyl'd *pontifices maximi*, or chief prieſts.

'Tis plain Melchizedek worſhipped the true God; for he is ſaid to be *the prieſt of the moſt high God*, or *of the high and mighty God*, as ſome interpret it: a name of God oppos'd to the idols of the heathen, which are ſo often and ſo juſtly deſpiſed in the writings of the prophets, as unable to help their votaries; ſince they are void of ſenſe, motion and life, and ſo more ſtupid than

[d] Κύριοι ἦσαν τῆς τε κατὰ πόλεμον ἡγεμονίας καὶ τῶν θυσιῶν. In Polit. l. 3. c. 10.

[e] Rex Anius, rex idem hominum, Phœbique ſacerdos. *Æneid.* 3.

their very worſhippers [f]. As the true God was antiently known by this name of *moſt high* in the land of Canaan, the title ſeems to have been long preſerved among the Phenicians [g], whoſe country was not very remote from that which Melchizedek governed.

This great man having been an eminent type of our bleſſed Saviour, the myſtick reference of the name and titles of the former are explained in the epiſtle to the Hebrews [h], when the author of that epiſtle is proving the dignity of Chriſt's prieſthood to be ſuperior to that of Aaron; ſince Chriſt is *called of God a high prieſt after the order of Melchizedek* [i].

He cites the words of the pſalmiſt, to ſhew that our Saviour was conſecrated not without the oath of God: *The Lord hath ſworn, and will not repent, Thou art a prieſt for ever after the order of Melchizedek* [k]. Whereas the Levitical prieſts were ordained without that ſolemnity; whence he infers the inferiority of their order.

He inſinuates the ſame thing, when he ſhews that the Levitical prieſthood had not the regal authority joined to it, ſince the royal dignity appertained to the tribe of Ju-

[f] Iſa. 41. 7. and ver. 22, 23, 24. Chap. 44. 9——20. Pſal. 115. 4——9.

[g] *Philo Byblius ſpeaking of the Phenician gods, names* Ἐλιοῦν *for one of them, which appears to be the ſame with the Hebrew* עליון *in our text.*

[h] Heb. 7. 11.

[i] Heb. 5. 10.

[k] Pſal. 110. 4. Heb. 7. 20, 21, 22.

dah,

dah, as the prieſthood did to that of Levi [l]; whereas both were united in Chriſt, who, as he ſprang from the royal ſtock of Judah, ſo he was made a high prieſt after the order of Melchizedek, in whom both thoſe offices concurred.

The benediction this great perſon pronounced on Abram, is improved to the ſame purpoſe by this inſpired author, who ſays, *Without all contradiction the leſs is bleſſed of the better* [m]; intimating, that ſince the patriarch from whom Levi deſcended, received a ſolemn bleſſing from Melchizedek, the Levitical prieſts in the loins of Abram may be ſaid to have been bleſſed by that prieſt, and the ſuperiority of his order thereby ſignified.

To the ſame purpoſe, and after the ſame manner, he argues from Abram's paying tithes to Melchizedek. *Now conſider*, ſays he, *how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abram gave the tenth of the ſpoils. And verily they that are of the ſons of Levi, who receive the office of the prieſthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people*, &c. *But he whoſe deſcent is not counted from them, received tithes of Abraham, and bleſſed him that had the promiſes* [n]. *And, as I may ſo ſay, Levi alſo who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchi-*

[l] Heb. 7. 14.
[m] Ver. 6, 7.
[n] Ver. 4, 5, 6.

zedek met him [o]. From all which he concludes the imperfection of the Levitical prieſthood, and the perfection of that of Melchizedek [p]; and conſequently that of Chriſt, who is a prieſt after his order.

Laſtly, He confirms this doctrine by obſerving that the holy ſcripture repreſents the prieſthood of Chriſt to be without ſucceſſion, and of eternal duration; a privilege to which the houſe of Aaron could never pretend, ſince the death of one high prieſt of his family made it neceſſary for another to ſucceed in that office: and ſince both the Levitical prieſthood, and the ceremonial law which appertained to it, were to be changed to give way to the more glorious diſpenſation of the goſpel, in which the eternal prieſtſtood of Chriſt was to take place. *And they truly*, ſays he, ſpeaking of the prieſts under the law, *were many prieſts, becauſe they were not ſuffered to continue by reaſon of death. But this man, becauſe he continues ever, hath an unchangeable prieſthood* [q]. And a little after, *For the law maketh men high prieſts, who have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was ſince the law, maketh the Son, who is conſecrated for evermore* [r].

The prieſthood of Aaron indeed in many things typified that of our Saviour, as the ſame epiſtle to the Hebrews plainly makes appear; but it was neceſſary the greater

[o] Ver. 9, 10.
[p] Ver. 11.
[q] Heb. 7. 23, 24, 25.
[r] Ver. 28.

dignity

dignity of the latter ſhould be prefigured, which is done by the character of Melchizedek, recorded in the old teſtament. And as the antient Jews thought the holy ſcripture almoſt conſtantly directed their view to the Meſſiah; ſo 'tis evident, that divers of the moſt eminent prophets, captains, judges, kings and prieſts, mentioned in the ſacred hiſtory, were types of him: and therefore 'tis no wonder that this divine writer inſiſts ſo much on the hiſtory of Melchizedek, in whom the office of a prieſt was united to that of a king, as a plain type of our Redeemer.

I don't think it neceſſary to recount the various conjectures which have been made about the king of Salem, by thoſe whoſe too great curioſity has rendered them very ſollicitous to know who he was, and from what family he deſcended: for I take this inquiry to be as unneceſſary and vain, as to ſeek after the ſepulchre of Moſes, which the ſcripture ſays, *No man knows to this day* [f]; or that queſtion of Manoah, who asked the angel that appeared to him, What was his name, and had no other anſwer than this, *Why askeſt thou after my name, ſeeing it is ſecret* [s]?

But ſince the account given of him in the book of Geneſis, and in the epiſtle to the Hebrews, ſufficiently ſhews that he was

[f] Deut. 34. 6. | [s] Judg. 13. 17, 18.

a *man* [t], whatever ſome have advanced to the contrary; it may ſeem very ſtrange that the author of this epiſtle ſhould declare, he was *without father, without mother, without deſcent*, or genealogy [u]; *having neither beginning of days, nor end of life:* and that *being made like the Son of God, he abides a prieſt continually.* Yet when 'tis ſuggeſted, as it is in the ſame place, that the prieſthood of Chriſt was prefigured by this perſon, 'tis not ſo difficult to underſtand the meaning of thoſe expreſſions; and that they are not to be taken in an abſolute ſenſe, as if he was without parentage and genealogy, as if he was never born, nor ever died; for this is inconſiſtent with the ſtate of any mere man: but that the ſenſe is, there is no account in his hiſtory of what family he deſcended, of the time of his birth, or that of his death; all which were purpoſely concealed, to render him as fit a type of our bleſſed Saviour, as the condition of a frail man would allow. For Chriſt may be ſaid to be *without father*, in reſpect of his human nature; *without mother*, in regard of his divine; *without beginning of days*, as he is God; and *without end of life*, not only as he is God, but as he is man too, now ſince he is riſen from the dead.

And ſeeing a more than ordinary care was antiently taken to preſerve the genealogy both of kings and prieſts, and no ſuch

[t] Heb. 7. 4. | [u] ἀγενεαλόγητος, ver. 3.

thing

thing is done for Melchizedek, notwithſtanding his eminency in both offices, 'tis a ſufficient indication that the account of his family and deſcent, of his birth and death, are omitted in the ſacred hiſtory, to give him ſome ſhadow of reſemblance to our Saviour, the dignity of whoſe perſon, and eternity of whoſe prieſthood, he was deſign'd to typify and repreſent, as much as the circumſtances of human nature could permit.

Having conſidered the character of that great prince who congratulated Abram, I am now,

(3.) To ſpeak of the congratulation itſelf.

The great reſpect Melchizedek bare to the patriarch, is expreſſed in the text, by his going out *to meet him*, by the *entertainment* he gave him, and by the *bleſſing* he pronounced on him, on the occaſion of his glorious expedition.

He took this opportunity, not only to ſhew his hoſpitality to Abram and his troops, who were probably much fatigu'd with long and ſpeedy marches, but to expreſs his affection to the noble cauſe of liberty, which Abram had vindicated with ſo much courage, reſolution and good conduct, and which the providence of God had ſo ſignally favoured, in crowning his enterprizes with the deſired ſucceſs.

Philo indeed ſays, *Melchizedek offered ſacrifices* on the account of this victory [v]; and

[v] Ἐπινίκια ἔθυε.

'tis poſſible he might preſent to God other ſacrifices beſides that of praiſe on this occaſion; ſeeing this is not at all inconſiſtent with his treating Abraham and his army with bread and wine. But the proof the Romaniſts pretend to bring for their ſacrifice of the maſs, from the ſuppoſition that bread and wine were the matter of Melchizedek's oblation, is too far fetch'd to need a ſerious refutation. Nor is it worth the while to give a particular account of a tradition which paſſes among the eaſtern chriſtians, *That Melchizedek offered no bloody ſacrifices, but only bread and wine* [w]. 'Tis much more reaſonable to conclude, that as the Ammonites and Moabites expoſed themſelves to a curſe, and were not ſuffered *to enter into the congregation of the Lord, even to the tenth generation, becauſe they met not the Iſraelites with bread and water in the way, when they came out of Egypt* [x]; ſo this pious prince, who entertain'd Abram and his forces with bread and wine, after they had been hazarding their lives for the ſervice of the publick, entail'd a bleſſing on himſelf by this generous and hoſpitable act, while he pronounced a *bleſſing* on *him who had the promiſes:* which is the next thing under conſideration.

[w] Vid. Selden de Jure Nat. & Gent. juxta Hebr. l. 3. c. 2.

[x] Deut. 23. 3, 4.

For

For one man *to bleſs* another, in the common uſe of that phraſe, is to wiſh or pray for his happineſs and proſperity: and it being uſual for men to ſignify their reſpect to each other by the expreſſion of ſuch deſires; *to bleſs*, in the Hebrew idiom, is *to ſalute*, or *pay reſpect*. Thus when Joſeph preſented his father to the king of Egypt, 'tis ſaid, *Jacob bleſſed Pharaoh* [y]; and the ſame phraſe is uſed when he went out of the king's preſence. And becauſe 'tis common for men to take notice of the good qualities or actions of thoſe whom they eſteem, and to whom they would ſhew a great deal of reſpect, the ſame word ſometimes imports *to praiſe*. Thus David ſays to Abigail, *Bleſſed be thy advice, and bleſſed be thou, who haſt kept me this day from coming to ſhed blood* [z], &c. As if he had ſaid, Thy counſel is very much to be commended, and thou art worthy of eſteem and praiſe, who haſt given me this good advice.

Another principal part of civility is to acknowledge obligations; and ſo, *to bleſs*, may ſometimes be interpreted, *to give thanks*. Thus when Joab had obtained leave of David to bring Abſalom again to court after his exile; his grateful reſentment of this favour is thus expreſſed: *Joab fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himſelf, and thanked the king* [a], or *bleſſed the king*, as it is

[y] Gen. 47. 7, 10.
[z] 1 Sam. 25. 33.
[a] 2 Sam. 14. 22.

in

in the original. And as reſpect and gratitude are often ſhewn by making preſents, theſe are called bleſſings in the Hebrew dialect. *Receive my preſent from my hand*, ſays Jacob to his brother Eſau; *for therefore I have ſeen thy face, as tho I had ſeen the face of God, and thou waſt pleaſed with me. Take, I pray thee, my bleſſing, that is brought to thee* [b].

Nor is this word leſs frequently uſed for *congratulation:* for after the dedication of the temple of Solomon, we are told, *He ſent the people away; and they bleſſed the king, and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart, for all the goodneſs that the Lord had done for David his ſervant, and for Iſrael his people* [c]. That is, they congratulated the king, on this occaſion of publick joy and thankſgiving. And in this ſenſe aged Simeon bleſſed Joſeph, and Mary the mother of our Saviour [d].

According to this account, when our text ſays, Melchizedek bleſſed Abram, it may reaſonably be ſuppoſed, that the king of Salem, at this interview, ſaluted the patriarch with great marks of affection and reſpect; that he commended his generoſity and publick ſpirit, who ſo willingly drew his ſword in defence of the rights of mankind, and ſhew'd no leſs conduct in the ſpeedy march of his troops, and the prudent

[b] Gen. 33. 10, 11. 1 Sam. 25. 27.

[c] 1 Kings 8. 66.

[d] Luke 2. 33, 34.

diſ-

diſpoſition of them to ſurprize the enemy, than courage in expoſing his own perſon at the head of them: that he did not omit to recount the great obligations all the neighbouring princes owed to this victorious general, who had cleared the country of thoſe tyrants, whoſe barbarity was become inſupportable; ſince they had laid waſte ſo many fruitful countries, and depopulated ſo many cities already, and were likely to extend their exorbitant power much farther in a very little time: that he returned thanks to Abram, as the reſtorer and defender of the common liberty; that he preſented him ſome refreſhments, and even regal'd his army with bread and wine, as an acknowledgment of his extraordinary ſervices to the publick; and that he congratulated him on ſo glorious and joyful an occaſion, wiſhing him all imaginable proſperity and ſucceſs for the future.

Melchizedek, in quality of a king, had reaſon to bleſs Abram after this manner: but the character of his prieſthood gives us a yet more full idea of his bleſſing. For the prediction of future benefits is commonly called a bleſſing [e]; and in this ſenſe the patriarchs were wont to bleſs their children. And as it ſometimes ſignifies an act which properly belonged to the prieſtly office, it was not only a prayer for the proſperity

[e] Gen. 27. and chap. 49.

of

of others, but a prophecy of their happineſs. After this manner Aaron and his ſons were ordered to bleſs the children of Iſrael under the law, ſaying, *The Lord bleſs thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face to ſhine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace* [f]: for 'tis added, *And they ſhall put my name upon the children of Iſrael, and I will bleſs them* [g]. Theſe ſentences had the force of divine promiſes, and were pronounced in the name of God, to aſſure their accompliſhment to all who worſhipped and obeyed him. And in our text, inſtead of *bleſſed be Abram*, the Arabick verſion renders it, *Abram ſhall be bleſſed.*

That Melchizedek bleſſed Abram by virtue of his prieſtly office, appears, in that the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews infers the authority and dignity of the former above the latter, from this very act, when he ſays, *Without all contradiction, the leſs is bleſſed of the better* [h]. So that there is no inconſiſtence in ſuppoſing that Melchizedek bleſſed Abram both in a civil and religious manner; that, as he was a prieſt, he added predictions of his ſucceſs, and aſſurances of the favour of God, to the congratulation he made him as a king.

This is confirmed by the form of words he uſed in pronouncing this bleſſing, *Bleſſed*

[f] Num. 6. 23—26.
[g] Ver. 27.
[h] Heb. 7. 7.

be

be Abram of the moſt high God, poſſeſſor of heaven and earth. For this name *of the moſt high God*, being uſed in oppoſition to the falſe gods of the pagan nations, was fit to be mentioned on this occaſion, to excite the patriarch's faith and confidence in the divine favour and protection; and the other title, of *poſſeſſor of heaven and earth*, which the Septuagint renders, the *maker of heaven and earth*, ſeems added to aſſert the ſovereign authority and univerſal dominion of God. And thus, 'tis as if the royal prieſt had ſaid, "May "the ſupreme Ruler of the world, who has "an undoubted right to govern the univerſe "which himſelf has created and upholds; "may he, who has ſo ſignally exerted his "power in favour of thoſe who fear and "ſerve him, in oppoſition to the proud and "cruel attempts of arbitrary princes, conti-"nue to crown thee with his bleſſing, who, "in confidence of his aſſiſtance and defence, "haſt fought his battles, and vindicated the "cauſe of liberty, which the Almighty ſo "much approves." For tho *God's kingdom ruleth over all* [i], as the pſalmiſt ſpeaks; tho he has an uncontroulable power and authority, yet he governs the world by rules of wiſdom and equity, and ſtill tempers his ſovereignty with clemency and goodneſs: for *ſhall not the judge of all the earth do right* [k]? Tho he *has a mighty arm, ſtrong is* his *hand*,

[i] Pſal. 103. 19. | [k] Gen. 18. 25.

and

and high is his *right hand*; yet *juſtice and judgment are the habitation of* his *throne, mercy and truth go before* his *face* [l].

And if Melchizedek was a prophet, as in all appearance he was, ſince he is ſo much preferred to Abram, to whom that title is expreſly given [m], he might be inſpired to bleſs Abram at this time, to give him the greater aſſurance of the divine approbation of his expedition, and the future bleſſings he might expect as the reward of ſo glorious an undertaking.

'Tis, moreover, worthy a remark, that this bleſſing was ſoon after confirmed to Abram from heaven in a viſion: for in the beginning of the fifteenth chapter 'tis ſaid, *After theſe things came the word of the Lord to Abram in a viſion, ſaying, Fear not, Abram, I am thy ſhield, and thy exceeding great reward.* And as this great victory was a pledge of the bleſſings God had promiſed him before, in theſe terms, *I will make of thee a great nation; and I will bleſs thee, and make thy name great, and thou ſhalt be a bleſſing: And I will bleſs them that bleſs thee* [n], &c. ſo we find this glorious action not only recorded to his immortal honour in this hiſtory of Moſes, but celebrated long after by the eloquent and inſpired pen of Iſaiah: for the beſt interpreters believe this prophet gives a deſcription of Abram, when he ſays,

[l] Pſal. 89. 13, 14.
[m] Gen. 20. 7.
[n] Gen. 12. 2, 3.

Who hath raiſed up the righteous man from the eaſt, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? He gave them as the duſt to his ſword, and as driven ſtubble to his bow. He purſued them, and paſſed ſafely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet. Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the Lord, the firſt, and with the laſt, I am he [o]. And indeed ſome of the Jews think this victory, obtained over the four kings, an early preſage and figure of the overthrow of the four great monarchies of the world, ſpoken of by the prophet Daniel; who, when he had predicted their deſtruction, adds, *And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatneſs of the kingdom under the whole heaven ſhall be given to the people of the ſaints of the moſt High, whoſe kingdom is an everlaſting kingdom; and all dominions ſhall ſerve and obey him* [p].

While the king of Salem does Abram the honour that his important ſervices to the publick required, he does not forget to offer ſolemn praiſes to that God who rules the hoſts of heaven, as well as the armies of men: for while he is congratulating and bleſſing the patriarch, he adds ——*And bleſſed be the moſt high God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand*; or, *who hath ſhut thine enemies into thy hand*, as ſome chuſe to render

[o] Iſa. 41. 2, 3, 4. | [p] Dan. 7. 27.

it:

it: an expreſſion which ſeems to ſignify how much the divine providence interpoſed to favour Abram with ſucceſs, by giving him an opportunity of incloſing his enemies, ſo as to give them an intire defeat. For whatever praiſe is due to the great benefactors of mankind, for procuring the publick welfare and peace, and whatever acknowledgment is due to their excellent qualities and illuſtrious actions; yet the chief glory belongs to the *moſt High*, who *ruleth in* every *kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomſoever he will*[q]: who, when he ſees fit, *cutteth off the ſpirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth*[r]: who can infatuate their counſels, or break their well-concerted meaſures, and make their armies fly, even when none purſues: who can inſpire thoſe, whom he deſigns for conquerors, with prudence in counſel, courage in the time of danger, reſolution in difficult circumſtances, and preſence of mind in the heat of battle; and can incline the ballance of victory how and when he pleaſes.

The piety of Abram no leſs appears, on this account, than that of Melchizedek; for while one offers ſolemn thankſgivings to God for this victory, the other humbly acknowledges the ſame bleſſing, in paying the homage of tithes, after Melchizedek's congratulation: for we propos'd to diſcourſe,

[q] Dan. 4. 25. | [r] Pſal. 76. 12.

II.

II. Of Abram's offering: *And he gave him tithes of all.*

He preſented an oblation of the tenth part of the ſpoils he had taken, to the high prieſt, by way of homage to the moſt high God, in whoſe cauſe he had been engaged, who had preſerved him from the perils of war, and had given him the necks of his enemies.

Some conjecture, that when he took the field he made a ſolemn vow to God, that if he would pleaſe to *cover his head in the day of battle*, and make him return a conqueror, he would pay this homage at his altar; as Jacob afterwards vowed to pay the tithes of all his ſubſtance, if God would preſerve him, ſupply him with *food and raiment*, and *return him to his father's houſe in peace* [s]. 'Tis true, Abram tells the king of Sodom, that he had lifted up his hand to the moſt high God, poſſeſſor of heaven and earth [t]; that he would take nothing of the ſpoil which belong'd to that prince: but whether this vow was made before the victory, or if ſo, whether Abram bound his ſoul with the ſame ſacred obligation to offer the tenth of his ſpoil, in caſe he ſhould return in triumph, is uncertain.

However, 'tis not to be doubted, that as war is an appeal to God to give, by his pro-

[s] Gen. 28. 20, 21, 22. | [t] Gen. 14. 23.

vidence, a deciſion of ſuch controverſies between princes and ſtates, as cannot be otherwiſe determined for want of ſufficient arbiters on earth; the pious patriarch had offered up his moſt fervent prayers for the divine aſſiſtance in ſo hazardous an undertaking. And now, neither the congratulations of the princes, nor the acclamations of the people whom he had reſcued from the hands of tyrants, could make him forget the duty he owed to that God, who *had given him his heart's deſire, and had not withholden the requeſt of his lips* [u].

'Tis obſervable, that the payment of tithes was a homage of a very antient date, as appears by what has been already ſaid. Some veſtiges of it are early to be found among ſome of the heathens, who devoted the tenth part of the product of their land, either to the ſervice of their gods, or to the exigencies of the publick; as appears by what Piſiſtratus, king of Athens, ſays in his letter to Solon [v].

And under the law of Moſes, God did not only claim the tithe of the product of their land as ſacred to himſelf, and order it to be devoted to his ſervice [w]; but after the Iſraelites had obtained a victory over the Midia-

[u] Pſal. 21. 2.

[v] Ἀπάγω ὃ ἔχας Θ' Ἀθηναίων τὸ αὐτὸ κλῆρος δεκάπην, οὐκ ἐμοὶ, ἀλλὰ ὁπόθεν ἔσαι ἀναλῶν εἰς τε θυσίας τὰς δημοτελεῖς, καὶ ὅπ ἄλλο τῷ κοινῶν, καὶ ἢν ὁ πόλεμος ἡμᾶς καταλάβῃ Diog. Laert. in vita Solon.

[w] Lev. 27. 30, 31, 32.

nites,

nites, there was an offering not unlike this decimation by Abram [x]: for a certain tribute was levy'd out of the ſpoil, which is call'd the heave-offering of the Lord. Something of this kind is referred to by the pſalmiſt, when, after he had celebrated ſome great victory, he gives this exhortation: *Vow and pay to the Lord your God; let all that are round about him bring preſents to him, who ought to be feared* [y]. And when the prophet Micah foretels the great advantages the Jews ſhould obtain over their enemies, he adds, *And I will conſecrate their gain to the Lord, and their ſubſtance to the Lord of the whole earth* [z].

As Melchizedek on the one hand did not think Abram leſs qualified for this great expedition, or leſs worthy of his bleſſing, becauſe the church to which the latter belong'd, and in which he miniſter'd, conſiſted only of a large family of pilgrims; ſo neither did the patriarch ſcruple to pay tithes to the high prieſt, becauſe he preſided in a church of a more extenſive form, and exerciſed a prieſthood of an order different from his; ſince they both worſhipped the true God with the ſame ſincerity and piety.

It was not to increaſe his riches, or inlarge his dominion, that Abram took up arms; but he became the head of a confederacy, form'd purpoſely to mortify oppreſſors, and

[x] Num. 31.
[y] Pſal. 76. 11.
[z] Mic. 4. 13.

to relieve the oppreſſed: juſtice and mercy were the principles that animated and governed him in this enterprize, the ſucceſs of which gave occaſion to his humility and piety to ſhine with a diſtinguiſhed luſtre, in taking care to give the great God the glory due to his name, as the pſalmiſt does on a like occaſion: *It is God,* ſays he, *that girdeth me with ſtrength, and maketh my way perfect. He maketh my feet like hinds feet, and ſetteth me upon my high places. He teacheth my hands to war; ſo that a bow of ſteel is broken by my arms. Thou haſt alſo given me the ſhield of thy ſalvation: and thy right hand has holden me up; and thy gentleneſs has made me great. Thou haſt enlarged my ſteps under me; that my feet did not ſlip. I have purſued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were conſumed. I have wounded them, that they were not able to riſe: they are fallen under my feet. For thou haſt girded me with ſtrength unto battle: thou haſt ſubdued under me thoſe that roſe up againſt me* [a], &c.

And now that the ſenſe of our text has been explained by the hiſtory of Abram's expedition, to which it refers, it appears to be no difficult matter to accommodate it to our preſent circumſtances, and the occaſion of our joy and thankſgiving to God this day.

[a] Pſal. 18. 32——39.

'Tis

'Tis evident to every one who reflects on the ſtate of publick affairs, that the people of this nation, and our allies, have the like reaſon to congratulate her majeſty on the train of ſucceſſes which has attended the confederate arms, that the kings of Canaan, and their people, had to ſhew the ſame reſpect to Abram; much more to offer ſolemn thankſgiving to the moſt high God, to whoſe ſpecial providence we owe all thoſe victories and advantages, which give us ſo juſt reaſon of joy at this time.

The cauſe in which her majeſty is engaged, is juſt and glorious, and of the ſame nature with that which Abram eſpouſed. 'Tis to ſet bounds to the exorbitant power of a great tyrant, and of the princes confederate with him, if they may ſtill be called princes, who have baſely ſacrificed their own honour, and their people's liberty, as much as in them lay, to the ambition of a tyrant; and were rather willing to become his vaſſals, in hope to tyrannize in their turn over ſlaves of an inferior rank, than to enjoy a juſt and regular authority, and to govern by rules of equity and reaſon.

Certainly all who are guided by principles of reaſon, and have any reliſh of religion, muſt own it to be a very glorious enterprize to ſuccour men in diſtreſs, to relieve the oppreſſed, to reſtore liberty to captives, and to help them to right who are wrong'd. And as Abram's expedition againſt the four ty-

rants of Canaan was both approved of God, and applauded by men; ſo the preſent war againſt France, and its allies, may be eaſily vindicated on the ſame principles, and 'tis to be hop'd will be at length crown'd with the ſame ſucceſs.

And if beſides the reſtitution of the common rights of mankind, Abram had a ſpecial regard to the deliverance of Lot and his family, not only on account of kindred, but of religion; he did but act by a very equal rule, to *do good to all men, but eſpecially to thoſe of the houſhold of faith.* And if the preſent war ſhould iſſue in the intire reſtoration of the violated rights of proteſtants, as well as of the common liberty of Europe, it will render the undertaking ſo much the more glorious and memorable. And tho ſome of our allies differ very much from us in their ſentiments as to matters of religion, this can't render our confederacy with them in defence of the publick liberty more unlawful, than Abram's alliance with Mamre, Eſchol, and Aner, his heathen neighbours, and his taking part with the five kings of the plain on a like occaſion. His prudence in this caſe was ſo far from being an impeachment of his piety, that he received at his return the approbation both of God and men for this glorious expedition.

The juſt congratulations her majeſty has received both from abroad and at home, and particularly on the great ſucceſſes of the laſt campaign,

campaign, reſemble thoſe which met the patriarch after his victory; and theſe ſucceſſes themſelves ſhew how much God delights *to honour thoſe who honour him*, while *thoſe that deſpiſe him are lightly eſteemed* [b]: and as Abram, when he returned laden with the ſpoils of his enemies, paid homage to the ſupreme Governor of the world, and thereby acknowledged that God had *taught his hands to war, and his fingers to fight*, and that *he had given him the ſhield of his ſalvation* [c]; ſo this excellent princeſs does, with like devotion, aſcribe all the bleſſings which attend her reign, and particularly the repeated ſucceſſes of her arms, to that God *by whom* good *kings* and queens *reign* [d]; who *ſaves the afflicted* and oppreſſed, *and brings down high looks* [e]; and wherein tyrants *deal proudly, ſhews himſelf to be above them* [f].

And as her majeſty has made appear how much ſhe has at heart the common welfare, by giving a conſiderable part of her property to carry on this neceſſary war with the greater vigour; ſo ſhe has ſhewn her piety and zeal, in devoting another part of the revenue of her crown for the more honourable maintenance of a publick miniſtry, whoſe buſineſs it is to preach the goſpel.

If we ſhould trace the many remarkable ſteps of the divine providence for ſome years

[b] 1 Sam. 2. 30.
[c] Pſal. 18. 34, 35.
[d] Prov. 8. 15.
[e] Pſal. 18. 27.
[f] Exod. 18. 11.

paſt, and take a view of the ſurprizing methods by which our civil and religious rights have been ſecured, againſt the ſecret deſigns and open force of our enemies; the reflection would eaſily engage our wonder, and might juſtly raiſe our devotion.

Can we forget the late happy revolution, and the good conſequences of it in the glorious reign of the late king William, without being unjuſt to the memory of that illuſtrious prince, and regardleſs of the foundation on which the preſent government ſtands, under which we enjoy ſo many privileges at preſent, and hope to tranſmit them ſecure to our poſterity?

I am loth to paſs by in ſilence the celebrated victories of Blenheim and Ramillies, and that before the walls of Turin, and ſome other ſucceſſes of the preſent war, which ſhine with a diſtinguiſhed glory, and will continue ſo to do in generations to come: but I ſhall confine myſelf to a brief recital of ſome of the moſt memorable actions of the laſt campaign.

The diſappointment of the intended invaſion of Scotland in the beginning of the year, was a very eminent turn of providence in our favour. The confidence of ſucceſs in that affair, expreſſed by the French agents in ſo many foreign courts, ſhew they had great aſſurance of abettors among us, if they had landed. The ſhock which was given to the publick credit on that occaſion, ought

to

to put us in mind how much we owe to the hand of God for fruſtrating the main deſign of our enemies at that time.

The ſurprizing ſpeed with which the Engliſh fleet was equipped to obſerve the enemy, the ſeaſonable prevention of their landing, and their ſhameful return to their port, after they had ſeverely ſuffered by the weather, may well furniſh us with *ſongs of deliverance*, to the praiſe of him whom the *winds and waves obey*, and who *doth what he pleaſes in heaven, and in earth, in the ſea, and all deep places* [g].

This abortive enterprize not only tended to the diſgrace of our enemies, but hindered them from executing their great projects in the Netherlands, where they expected to have prevailed by their numbers, if they could have diverted a part of the confederate forces, by making a deſcent in the north; and it muſt be confeſſed that their ſcheme was very well formed, had not God interpoſed for our help, and blaſted their pernicious devices.

The ſame good providence bleſſed our troops with a conſiderable victory at Audenard, over the ſuperior number of our enemies; preſerved Antwerp from falling into their hands, and reduced Ghent and Bruges by the victorious arms of the allies, after thoſe cities had been ſurprized by the enemy.

[g] Pſal. 135. 6.

Nor

Nor ſhould we omit to mention the wonderful progreſs of the forces of the duke of Savoy, who, notwithſtanding the almoſt inſuperable difficulties which encountered him, penetrated the territories of France, and made unexpected conqueſts there, to the great reputation of his prudent conduct and vigilance.

To theſe inſtances may be added the ſucceſs of our fleets, both in the Weſt-Indies and the Mediterranean ſea, in the conqueſt of Sardinia and Minorca, and the eaſy reduction of Mahon, the chief fortreſs and port of that iſland.

But that which crowns all the reſt, is, the forcing of thoſe lines that had ſo long been a ſtrong barrier to France, and thereby opening a way to raiſe contributions in that kingdom, together with the taking of the city and citadel of Liſle, notwithſtanding the natural and artificial ſtrength of that place, and the numerous gariſon which defended it; and this in the preſence of the royal army of France, with the princes of the blood at the head of it, and under the direction of their moſt celebrated general; who made that enterprize as difficult as poſſible, by cauſing an inundation of the country about that important place, to cut off from the allies the ſtores which were neceſſary to carry on that memorable ſiege.

There

There are many circumſtances which my time will not ſuffer me to recount, that add to the glory of theſe conqueſts: ſuch as the preſervation of the lives of thoſe illuſtrious generals, who commanded the confederate army, when expoſed to imminent danger: the favourable weather God was pleaſed to give for the carrying on the ſiege of Liſle, and for the reduction of Ghent and Bruges, at a time of the year, when, according to the ordinary courſe of things, it was not to be expected: the panick fear which ſeized our enemies, and their ſhameful flight from their intrenchments when the confederate troops paſt the Schelde; and the very ſeaſonable diſappointment of the duke of Bavaria's deſign againſt Bruſſels.

All theſe are worthy of our ſpecial notice, and ought to diſpoſe our minds to bleſs and adore the Almighty, and to rejoice in his ſalvation, in whoſe *name we ſet up our banners* [h]; and to encourage our addreſſes to him for the continuance of his favour, that all theſe ſucceſſes may at length be crowned with an honourable and a laſting peace.

In the mean time the goodneſs of God ſhould lead us to repentance, leſt after ſo many deliverances from the hands of our enemies, and ſo many victories over them, he ſhould at laſt ſuffer them to prevail againſt us, and to triumph over us: or leſt

[h] Pſal. 20. 5.

he

he ſhould puniſh us for our ſins more ſeverely, and more immediately by his own hand. And how *terrible a thing is it to fall into the hands of the living God* [i] ! Tho the arms of Abram were ſucceſsful to deliver the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Admah and Zebojim, from the tyrants who plundered them, and led them into captivity ; yet his repeated interceſſion with God for them could not turn away his wrath, when neither the calamities they had ſuffered, nor the mercies they had received, made any impreſſion on their minds to reclaim them from their vices [k]. And their ingratitude to heaven, after ſo ſignal a deliverance from their enemies, drew vengeance down on their own heads in ſtorms of fire and brimſtone, to their utter deſtruction. May this nation avoid the ſame crimes, leſt they incur a puniſhment like that which befel thoſe miſerable cities.

To conclude : Since God has bleſſed her majeſty's reign with the accompliſhment of that important union of England and Scotland, as well as with a long train of ſurprizing victories and ſucceſſes ; ſince he has rewarded her piety and moderation, in giving her ſo many triumphs over her enemies, and ſo great an eſteem and affection in the hearts of her people, as appears by the una-

[i] Heb. 10. 31. | [k] Gen. 18.

nimity

nimity and zeal of their repreſentatives for the ſupport of her government, ſhe may well be congratulated on this happy occaſion as Abram was by Melchizedek, *Bleſſed be* queen Anne *of the moſt high God, the poſſeſſor of heaven and earth; and bleſſed be the moſt high God, who has delivered her enemies into her hand:* or in the words of Deborah to Jael, when ſhe had ſlain Siſera, after the defeat of the army of king Jabin, *Bleſſed above women ſhall* ſhe *be; bleſſed ſhall* ſhe *be above women*, &c.

Let us expreſs our joy, as the pſalmiſt repreſents the people of Iſrael to have done, on a like occaſion, for the ſucceſs of their kings: let us ſay, *The* queen *ſhall rejoice in thy ſtrength, O Lord; and in thy ſalvation how greatly ſhall* ſhe *rejoice! Thou haſt given* her her *heart's deſire, and haſt not withholden the requeſt of* her *lips. Selah. For thou preventeſt* her *with the bleſſings of goodneſs: thou ſetteſt a crown of pure gold on* her *head* [l]. Her *glory is great in thy ſalvation: honour and majeſty haſt thou laid upon* her. *For thou haſt made* her *moſt bleſſed——Thou haſt made* her *exceeding glad with thy countenance. For the* queen *truſteth in the Lord; and thro' the mercy of the moſt High* ſhe *ſhall not be moved* [m].

And let us offer our fervent prayers to Almighty God for the preſervation of her majeſty's perſon, the proſperity of her go-

[l] Pſal. 21. 1, 2, 3. | [m] Ver. 5, 6, 7.

vernment,

vernment, the ſucceſs of her arms; and the ſupport of her royal mind under the great affliction lately befallen her, by the death of the prince her conſort, amidſt the triumphs we have been commemorating. Let thoſe who miniſter in ſacred things, bleſs her majeſty, in the words of the 20th pſalm, *The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee: ſend thee help from the ſanctuary, and ſtrengthen thee out of Sion. Remember all thine offerings —— Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counſel. We will rejoice in thy ſalvation; and in the name of our God we will ſet up our banners: the Lord fulfil all thy petitions. Now know I, that the Lord ſaveth his anointed; he will hear* her *from his holy heaven, with the ſaving ſtrength of his right hand. Some truſt in chariots, and ſome in horſes; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. They are brought down, and fallen; but we are riſen, and ſtand upright. Save, Lord, let the king hear us when we call.*

And let all the people ſay, *Amen.*

The reſt of the people of God.

A funeral ſermon occaſioned by the death of the reverend Mr. *John Piggott*, late miniſter of the goſpel. Preach'd *March* 29, 1713.

SERMON IX.

Hebrews iv. 9.

There remaineth therefore a reſt to the people of God.

'TIS to fulfil the deſire of a dying friend, that I am now to diſcourſe on theſe words. The worthy paſtor of this congregation having ſome months before his deceaſe, made choice of this paſſage, as a proper ſubject for his funeral ſermon, importun'd me to undertake this ſervice. He had then, it ſeems, *the ſentence of death in himſelf*, and perceiv'd its gradual approaches, when

when we were willing to hope it was at a much greater diſtance from him, than what time has ſince made appear.

As it was the buſineſs of his life to conſult your advantage, and to endeavour your edification; ſo he was ſollicitous that his death might be inſtructive to you too: for as the apoſtle Paul ſays of Timothy, *he naturally cared for your ſtate* [n], and your welfare conſtantly engaged his thoughts in the time of his ſickneſs, as well as that of his health; ſo he might well have expreſſed the temper of his mind toward you in the terms of the apoſtle Peter: *I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of theſe things, tho you know them, and be eſtabliſhed in the preſent truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to ſtir you up, by putting you in remembrance. Knowing that ſhortly I muſt put off this my tabernacle.——Moreover, I will endeavour that you may be able after my deceaſe to have theſe things always in remembrance* [o].

When the diſtemper under which he laboured had ſo far weakened his conſtitution, that he ſuppoſed his *departure was at hand*, he was willing to have hazarded the remains of that life, the vigour of which he had ſpent in your ſervice, to have obtained an opportunity of preaching to you one ſermon more, and would gladly have been brought from his *bed*

[n] Phil. 2. 20. | [o] 2 Pet. 1. 12——15.

of

of languiſhing to *the houſe of prayer*, to have given you his dying charge, if poſſible, from this pulpit, whence you had ſo often heard him explain the principles, and enforce the duties of our holy religion. But alas! tho his *ſpirit was willing*, his *fleſh was* then too *weak* for this ſervice. However, what he could not perform himſelf, he was willing ſhould in ſome ſort be done by another. And tho his lips are now clos'd in the ſilent grave, yet, like Abel, *he being dead, yet ſpeaketh* [p]: ſpeaks by the ſacred doctrine he ſo often inculcated on your minds in his ſermons and exhortations, and by the holy example he gave you, when converſant among you; ſpeaks by that faith and hope, that patience and meekneſs, that humility and reſignation, that charity and kindneſs, which appeared both in the conduct of his life, and in his behaviour on a dying bed: ſpeaks to let you know how excellent and neceſſary a thing true religion is, to make you happy in life and health, in ſickneſs and at death: ſpeaks by his own ſickneſs and death, that *righteous men*, as well as others, *are taken away* [q], and *the prophets do not live for ever* [r]; and to put you all in mind *how frail you are* [t], that you may *ſo number your days, as to apply your hearts unto wiſdom* [s]: ſpeaks to you particularly by the words of our text, whereby he,

[p] Heb. 11. 4.
[q] Iſa. 57. 1.
[r] Zech. 1. 5.
[t] Pſal. 39. 4.
[s] Pſal. 90. 12.

after the most solemn manner, recommends to you, as a matter worthy of your utmost care, that you would secure to yourselves an *entrance into that rest which remains to the people of God. Being dead*, I say, *he yet speaketh:* but which is infinitely more awful, that God, whose *word lives and abides for ever*, whose word will be either *a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death* to you [t], speaks, and that after the most obliging and importunate manner, to invite you to *enter into this rest* [u]; and to *take heed lest any of you fall short of it thro' unbelief* [v].

The main design of the author of this epistle, is to shew how much the administration of the gospel is to be preferred to that of the law. This he makes appear by many arguments, the chief of which are taken from the dignity of the Mediator of the new testament, and from the excellency and perfection of his sacrifice.

When he had given a glorious idea of this Mediator in the first and second chapters, and had shewn in the beginning of the third, that he is as much superior to Moses, as a son is to a servant; at the seventh verse he takes occasion to exhort the Hebrews to attend to the doctrine of the gospel, and to warn them of the danger of an impious contempt, and obstinate refusal of the gracious proposals it contains; which, as he shews, would cer-

[t] 2 Cor. 2. 16.
[u] Heb. 3. 19.
[v] Chap. 4. 1.

tainly

tainly expoſe them to a much ſeverer ſentence than that pronounced and executed on the Iſraelites for their diſobedience and unbelief formerly in the wilderneſs.

This caution he thinks fit to give in the words of the pſalmiſt: *Wherefore, as the Holy Ghoſt ſaith, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation, in the wilderneſs; when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and ſaw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and ſaid, They do always err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways: ſo I ſware in my wrath, they ſhall not enter into my reſt* [w].

To enforce this admonition, he ſuggeſts that David in theſe words propheſied of the time of the goſpel, when he ſays, *To day, if ye will hear his voice*, &c. and that therefore 'tis reaſonable to apply the example he produces of the puniſhment of the unbelieving tribes, who provoked God in the deſart, to thoſe who ſhould reject the glad tidings of the goſpel; to ſhew the guilt and danger of the latter above the former, and that with as much greater force, as the light and grace of the goſpel tranſcend whatever might ſeem moſt glorious in the law. Therefore he inſiſts, *ver.* 12. *Take heed, brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort*

[w] Pſal. 95. Heb. 3. 7——12.

one another daily, while it is called to day, leſt any of you be hardened thro' the deceitfulneſs of ſin [x]. And again—*With whom was he grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had ſinned, whoſe carcaſes fell in the wilderneſs? And to whom ſware he that they ſhould not enter into his reſt, but to them that believed not? So we ſee that they could not enter in becauſe of unbelief* [y].

Immediately after he had repeated this ſad inſtance of God's judgment on rebellious Iſrael, he urges his former caution, and adds in the beginning of the fourth chapter; *Let us therefore fear, leſt a promiſe being left us of entring into his reſt, any of you ſhould ſeem to come ſhort of it. For unto us was the goſpel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we who have believed do enter into reſt; as he ſaid, As I have ſworn in my wrath, if they ſhall enter into my reſt* [z].

And to make it evident that the pſalmiſt, in mentioning the oath of God againſt the Iſraelites, namely, *That they ſhould not enter into his reſt*, inſinuates, that there is now alſo, in the time of the goſpel, a reſt propoſed to us, which infidels ſhall be precluded, and into which thoſe who believe ſhall certainly enter; he conſiders the ſeveral kinds of reſt in which God is pleaſed to claim a pro-

[x] Ver. 13.
[y] Ver. 17, 18, 19.
[z] Chap. 4. ver. 1, 2, 3.

perty,

perty, which are therefore called *his reſts*, and into which his people may be ſaid to enter, that ſo it may appear what reſt that is which the prophet David intimates in the forecited words.

He ſhews firſt that it could not be the ſabbath, that day of reſt which enſued the creation, and in which it is ſaid, *God reſted from all his works*; ſince this reſt takes its date from the foundation of the world: whereas the reſt the pſalmiſt means, is ſpoken of as yet to come.——*If they ſhall enter into my reſt*; *altho the works were finiſhed from the foundation of the world. For he ſpake in a certain place of the ſeventh day on this wiſe: And God did reſt the ſeventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they ſhall enter into my reſt* [a]. That is, they ſhall by no means enter into my reſt, according to the import of the particle *if*, which in the Hebrew idiom implies a ſtrong negation; and this is a form of ſpeech eſpecially uſed in ſwearing. Thus when Moſes puts the tribes of Iſrael in mind of their obſtinacy and unbelief, he adds, that *God was wroth, and ſware, ſaying, Surely there ſhall not one of theſe men of this evil generation, ſee the good land*, &c. 'Tis in the original, *If a man among theſe men ſhall ſee* [b], &c.

He farther obſerves, that the reſt, ſuggeſted by the pſalmiſt, could not be the land

[a] Ver. 3, 4, 5. | [b] אם יראה איש.

of Canaan, tho this was alſo called God's reſt, becauſe Iſrael had been poſſeſſed of it long before the time of David. *Again, he limiteth a certain day, ſaying, in David, To day, after ſo long a time: as it is ſaid, To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jeſus*, i. e. Joſhua, *had given them reſt, then would he not afterward have ſpoken of another day* [c].

The ſum of this reaſoning amounts to this: The royal pſalmiſt, in warning men to hear the voice of God *to day*, and not to harden their hearts againſt it as the Iſraelites formerly did, leſt they ſhould be puniſhed like them; ſignifies, that by obeying this call of God, in believing the divine word, they ſhall be admitted into God's reſt; which can't here mean the ſabbath, or the land of Canaan, tho each of theſe is call'd his reſt; becauſe men enter'd into theſe long before the time of David, and therefore muſt be underſtood of a ſtate of reſt propoſed by the goſpel, of which he propheſies: ſo that the author of this epiſtle juſtly concludes in the words of our text, *There remaineth therefore a reſt to the people of God.*

The method I ſhall take in treating theſe words, will be;

I. To give you a general idea of them, by a brief explication.

[c] Ver. 7, 8.

II. To

II. To inſiſt more particularly on the principal things contained in them.

I. I am to give a general view of the text, by explaining the terms of it: and am to ſhew,

1. What is ſignified by this *reſt*.

2. Who are deſigned by this character, *The people of God*.

3. What is meant by the *remaining* of this reſt to them.

1. As to the *reſt* here ſpoken of, 'tis evident it ſignifies the ſtate of happineſs which the righteous ſhall enjoy in the world to come: and this term, like that of *peace*, is uſed in the holy ſcripture in a very extenſive ſenſe; and ſometimes ſignifies,

(1.) That eaſe and repoſe which enſues a ceſſation of toil and labour; for theſe were firſt introduced by ſin, and therefore 'tis a part of the curſe pronounced on fallen man, that *in ſorrow* he ſhould *eat of the* fruits of the *ground all the days of* his *life* [d]; and that *in the ſweat of* his *face*, he ſhould *eat* his *bread* [e]. And that labour and ſorrow, that vanity and vexation of ſpirit, of which the wiſe man ſo often complains in the book of Eccleſiaſtes, may well be taken for a comment on this righteous ſentence. The miſery of men, on this account, appeared to him ſo great, as to make him prefer the ſtate

[d] Gen. 3. 17. | [e] Ver. 19.

of the *dead* to that of the *living* [f]; and *the day of death to the day of one's birth* [g]. Indeed to be delivered from theſe evils, is no inconſiderable advantage: tho we are not to imagine, that the reſt ſpoken of in our text, only regards that of the body in the grave; however, this is taken notice of in ſcripture as a benefit. When Job deſcribes the eaſe and quiet of the grave, he elegantly ſays, *There the wicked ceaſe from troubling, and there the weary are at reſt. There the priſoners reſt together; they hear not the voice of the oppreſſor. The ſmall and great are there; and the ſervant is free from his maſter* [h]. And the prophet Iſaiah, ſpeaking of the death of the righteous man, ſays, *He ſhall enter into peace; they ſhall reſt in their beds: each one walking in his uprightneſs* [i]. An angel ſpeaks to the ſame purpoſe to the prophet Daniel, *Go thou thy way, till the end be; for thou ſhalt reſt, and ſtand in thy lot at the end of days* [k]. And after the like manner the apoſtle John is inſtructed by a voice from heaven, ſaying, *Write; Bleſſed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, ſaith the Spirit; that they may reſt from their labours, and their works follow them* [l].

But the reſt in the text may be ſuppoſed, eſpecially to regard that of the ſouls of good men, when ſeparated from their bodies; for

[f] Eccl. 4. 2.
[g] Chap. 7. 1.
[h] Job 3. 17, 18, 19.
[i] Iſa. 57. 2.
[k] Dan. 12. 13.
[l] Rev. 14. 13.

while

while they are *abſent from the body*, they will be *preſent with the Lord* [m], when they ſhall be free from all the fatigue and care which attend them in this life. Above all, it may denote that perfect ſtate of reſt which will follow the reſurrection of the juſt, whoſe bodies and ſouls, when re-united, ſhall participate the ſame bleſſing, and enjoy an everlaſting immunity from all toil, labour and uneaſineſs.

This ſenſe of the word is confirmed, by the alluſion which the author of this epiſtle makes in the context, both to the condition of the Iſraelites, who were delivered from a ſtate of ſlavery and bondage, which they had long undergone in Egypt, and were promiſed a ſtate of liberty and eaſe in the land of Canaan; and alſo to the reſt of the ſabbath, in which God is ſaid to have reſted from all his works, and which was deſigned to give men reſt from their ordinary toil and labour: and therefore the words we are conſidering, run thus in the original, *There remains therefore a ſabbatiſm for the people of God*; i. e. a ceſſation from all toil and labour.

(2.) This reſt ſignifies a ſtate of ſettlement and ſecurity, in oppoſition to the various changes and viciſſitudes, the hazards and dangers which attend good men in this life. Thus when God promiſes the people of Iſ-

[m] 2 Cor. 5. 8.

rael,

rael, that *his preſence ſhould go with them*, and that *he would give them reſt* [n]; 'tis plain, he hereby lets them know, that whereas they were now wandering in the deſart, he would bring them to a ſettled ſtate, and that he would at length ſecure them from the inconveniences and dangers which attended them during their pilgrimage. And when this people were freed from the calamity of war, 'tis ſaid, their *land had reſt from war* [o]. On the ſame account 'tis ſaid of David, that *the Lord gave him reſt from all his enemies round about* [p]: and it was propheſied of Solomon, that he ſhould be *a man of reſt* [q]; that is, he ſhould have a peaceful reign. To the like purpoſe the Jews are ſaid to have *had reſt from their enemies* [r], after the defeat of Haman's plot, to ſignify the tranquillity and ſafety they enjoyed on that occaſion.

This well agrees with the reference made in the context to what was promiſed the Iſraelites; namely, that after all the journeys and toils of the wilderneſs for forty years, and all the wars which ſhould attend them at their entrance into the promis'd land, they ſhould at length attain a ſtate of ſettlement and ſecurity. Thus good men, tho in a ſtate of pilgrimage and warfare during their abode in this world, ſhall at laſt arrive at heaven, where there is perfect ſafety and

[n] Exod. 33. 14.
[o] Joſh. 14. 15. Judg. 5. 31.
[p] 2 Sam. 7. 1.
[q] 1 Chron. 22. 9.
[r] Eſth. 9. 16.

tran-

tranquillity: tho all things here are fluctuating and subject to change, that state of glory is constant and permanent.

And as the tribes of Israel were promised the divine protection, so long as they were stedfast in God's covenant; so that they should have no occasion to fear any invasion from their enemies, nay, that these should not so much as desire their land, when all the men were withdrawn from their frontiers, which happened thrice a year, when they were obliged to go up to Jerusalem to worship: so this might adumbrate that perfect security and uninterrupted tranquillity which the righteous shall enjoy in the heavenly state.

(3.) This term frequently signifies joy and pleasure, and is opposed to a state of grief and pain; as appears by the account the apostle Paul gives of the future judgment, when he says to the Thessalonians, *It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you, who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels* [f], &c. And when the apostle John describes the miseries of those who shall be condemned to eternal torments, he says, *They have no rest, day nor night* [g].

The people of Israel were promised rest, in this sense, in the land of Canaan, in case

[f] 2 Thess. 1. 6, 7. | [g] Rev. 14. 11.

they

they were obedient to the divine laws. They were not only to be protected from calamities and dangers, ſo that none ſhould make them afraid, *but to ſit down under their vines and fig-trees* [t], to enjoy health and long life, peace and plenty [u]: in ſhort, the confluence of all temporal bleſſings, that might give them innocent pleaſure and joy; or, to uſe the apoſtle's words on a like occaſion, *to fill their hearts with food and gladneſs* [v].

Laſtly, Reſt is often taken for complacency, content and ſatisfaction. Thus 'tis ſaid, on the occaſion of Noah's ſacrifices, *The Lord ſmelled a ſweet ſavour* [w], or, as it is in the original, *a ſavour of reſt*; to ſhew his offerings were very acceptable to God. And this phraſe is elſewhere uſed, to ſhew God's complacency in the oblations which were preſented him [x], according to his own inſtitution. And when the pſalmiſt would calm the troubles of his mind, he thus expreſſes himſelf, *Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee* [y]. As if he had ſaid, Return, O my ſoul, to thy uſual refuge, to that content and ſatisfaction thou wert wont to enjoy in reſigning thyſelf to the divine conduct, and in reflecting on God's paſt favours. Again, *Reſt in the Lord, and wait patiently for him* [z], ſays

[t] Zech. 3. 10.
[u] Deut. 28. 2——14.
[v] Acts 14. 17.
[w] Gen. 8. 21.
[x] Numb. 28. 2.
[y] Pſal. 116. 7.
[z] Pſal. 37. 7.

he;

he; that is, rest satisfied with his wise disposal of all events. And when the prophet Zephaniah would shew how great complacency God takes in his people, he says, *The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing* [a].

Thus we have a general idea of this rest, which not only signifies a cessation from toil and labour, but a state of settlement and security, and of joy and pleasure; nay, that fulness of joy, which complacency and satisfaction denote: so that 'tis a term very fit to represent the happiness of the heavenly state.

2. We are now to consider who are the persons that shall attain this rest, designed by this character, *The people of God.*

'Tis well known that this title was, in antient times, given the tribes of Israel; and 'tis to be observed, that the author of this epistle constantly alludes to such things, and uses such terms as that nation was perfectly well acquainted with. They were called the *people of God*, because they were selected from the rest of mankind to be, after a very particular manner, instructed in the knowledge of the divine will, and were taken into covenant with God [b]. They were form'd into a political state, of which God himself was the

[a] Zeph. 3. 17. | [b] Deut. 4. 31 — 35.

king,

king, who gave them laws both eccleſiaſtical and civil; and by a long ſeries of miracles, delivered and protected them from their enemies, ſo long as they remain'd ſtedfaſt in his covenant. On this account they were called, *a choſen generation, a royal prieſthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people* [c].

Indeed they *were not all Iſrael who were of Iſrael* [d], nor all *the ſeed of Abraham*, in the ſenſe of the goſpel, who deſcended from him *according to the fleſh*; yet were they typical repreſentatives of that *holy nation*, that *kingdom of prieſts*, that *peculiar people*, which God determined to collect for himſelf out of a degenerate world, during the ſtate of the goſpel: which wonderfully altered the face of religion, and brought in a lively hope and a new account of things, refining and raiſing the minds of men from carnal and earthly, to ſpiritual and heavenly objects. Under this pure diſpenſation, they only are counted *Abraham's ſeed, and heirs according to the promiſe* [e], who imitate the *father of the faithful* in believing the word of God, and prove themſelves to be his children by imitating his example: they are reckoned Iſraelites indeed, *in whom there is no guile*; *who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the will of man, but of God* [f]; who are regenerated by the efficacy of the holy Spirit [g]. Theſe

[c] Exod. 19. 5, 6. 1 Pet. 2. 9.
[d] Rom. 9. 6, 7, 8.
[e] Gal. 3. 29.
[f] John 1. 13.
[g] John 3. 5——8.

are the people of God, in the ſenſe of our text, who truly believe in the name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and embrace his goſpel. And 'tis to theſe that this *reſt*, or ſtate of happineſs, *remains*; 'tis only they who *believe*, that *enter into this reſt* [h]. On the contrary, *without faith 'tis impoſſible to pleaſe God* [i]: and as the infidelity of the Iſraelites hindered them from entring into Canaan, ſo thoſe who disbelieve and reject the goſpel of Chriſt, will, without repentance, fall ſhort of eternal felicity, and be expoſed to the ſentence of eternal death and miſery.

3. The laſt thing to be explained, is the remaining of this reſt: *There remaineth a reſt to the people of God.* And this may import,

(1.) That this ſtate of happineſs is not to be expected in this preſent world. This is a ſtate of pilgrimage, where good men find no reſt for the ſoles of their feet: *I am a ſtranger with thee*, ſays the pſalmiſt, *and a ſojourner, as all my fathers were* [k]. And the author of this epiſtle, ſpeaking of the patriarchs, ſays, *They confeſſed that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims on earth*; and adds, that *They who ſay ſuch things, declare plainly that they ſeek a country*; *and that they deſire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not aſhamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city* [l]. This

[h] Heb. 4. 3.
[i] Heb. 11. 6.
[k] Pſal. 39. 12.
[l] Heb. 11. 13, 14, 15, 16.

is

is not their reſt, but there remains a reſt for them in the future ſtate.

(2.) It may alſo denote the certainty of their enjoyment of this happineſs; 'tis future, but 'tis real: the manſions of bliſs are prepared for them. The glory they hope for, *the crown of righteouſneſs* they expect, is ſaid *to be laid up for them in heaven* [m].

(3.) It may ſignify the duration of it. 'Tis not like the pleaſures of this world, which are momentary and fleeting, and which may be compared to the *crackling of thorns under a pot*, as the wiſe man elegantly repreſents the *laughter of a fool* [n]; for after a little noiſe and ſhort blaze, theſe trifling joys vaniſh and come to nothing, but often leave bitterneſs and remorſe behind them. The things of this world periſh in *the uſing* [o], and the *faſhion of it* continually *paſſeth away* [p]; but the ſaints have *in heaven a better and an enduring ſubſtance* [q]. Their crowns of glory never fade, their reſt is not interrupted there, but remains to eternity.

Having explained the terms of the text, I am now,

II. More particularly to diſcourſe on the principal things contained in it; and ſhall treat,

[m] Col. 1. 5. 2 Tim. 4. 8.
[n] Eccl. 7. 6.
[o] Col. 2. 22.
[p] 1 Cor. 7. 31.
[q] Heb. 1. 34.

1. Of the excellency of that future ſtate of happineſs, deſcribed here by *reſt*.

2. Of the character of the perſons who ſhall enjoy it, *viz. the people of God.*

3. Of the certainty of this ſtate.

1. The excellency of this ſtate of happineſs, repreſented by *reſt*, deſerves our particular conſideration.

We all naturally and neceſſarily deſire to be happy, and to be as happy as 'tis poſſible for us to be: and what can we deſire more, as large and importunate as our deſires are, than to be intirely free from labour and toil, danger and diſappointment, pain and ſorrow, anxiety and diſcontent; and to enjoy conſtant eaſe and repoſe, undiſturbed ſafety, exquiſite joy, and perfect ſatisfaction? Yet no leſs happineſs than this is ſignified by that *reſt which remains to the people of God*, as you have heard before. 'Tis ſuch indeed as *eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him* [r]. 'Tis a conſiderable advantage to be delivered from all the toil and vexation, cares and troubles, fears and hazards, which attend us in our preſent ſtate; to have *tears wiped from all eyes*, when there ſhall be *no more death, neither ſorrow, nor crying; neither ſhall there be any more pain* [s]. But 'tis a much higher degree of happineſs, to have

[r] 1 Cor. 2. 9. | [s] Rev. 21. 4.

the capacity of the ſoul enlarged and refined, to receive and reliſh heavenly joys, and then to have its deſires intirely ſatisfied, and *filled with all the fulneſs of God* [s]. Safety and tranquillity would make a moderate degree of the accommodations of this life very comfortable: but what words can expreſs the excellency of that ſtate and place, where the higheſt pleaſure is join'd with the utmoſt ſecurity, and where there's not the leaſt fear of loſing that divine favour, which gives the ſoul the greateſt content and ſatisfaction; where there is *fulneſs of joy, and pleaſures for evermore* [t]?

The many bright images and elegant figures, uſed in the holy ſcripture to deſcribe this bleſſed ſtate, fall infinitely ſhort of its real glory: but as the objects of ſenſe eaſily and ſtrongly affect us, the word of God repreſents the celeſtial glory by every thing which men chiefly admire and eſteem in this world; that by ſtriking their imaginations, their attention may be engaged to conſider the real excellency of that happineſs, and how to ſecure to themſelves the enjoyment of it.

What a magnificent deſcription is given us of the new Jeruſalem by the apoſtle John in his Revelation [u]! What *glorious things are ſpoken of the city of God!* The walls are great and high, the building regular and

[s] Eph. 3. 19.
[t] Pſal. 16. 11.
[u] Chap. 21, 22.

noble;

noble; the materials of the wall are jaſper, and the ſtreets of the city pure gold, like tranſparent glaſs; the foundations garniſhed with all manner of precious ſtones, the twelve gates twelve intire pearls: 'tis adorned with the throne of God, and favoured with the continual preſence of his glory, and that of our bleſſed Saviour, which illuminate this holy city. A river of water of life, clear as cryſtal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the lamb, flows thro' the midſt of it; on the banks of which grows the tree of life, bearing great variety of fruits every month, and leaves which have a healing virtue.

The inhabitants are dignified with the titles of *kings and prieſts*, who ſhall live and reign for ever. The crowns which are given them, the robes they wear, and the palms they carry in their hands, the places aſſign'd them on the throne of Chriſt, to ſit with him, as he ſits on his Father's throne [v], give us an idea of the higheſt glory to which creatures can be advanced: and their being fed with the fruits of the tree of life in the paradiſe of God, and with the hidden manna, and led by the Lamb to living fountains of water, and many like expreſſions, ſhew the exquiſite pleaſure which ſhall attend their being *ever with the Lord.*

It's reaſonable to believe, that the favours to be beſtowed in the heavenly ſtate on thoſe

[v] Chap. 7. 17.

whom the King of kings ſhall delight to honour, will be ſuitable to the greatneſs both of his power and of his love; and that thoſe to whom he diſdains not at preſent to give the endearing titles of his children and his friends, ſhall ſhare thoſe honours and delights, which are agreeable to the dignity of ſuch a relation.

It may be alſo juſtly concluded, that a felicity purchaſed for them at ſo vaſt a price as that of the blood of the Son of God, muſt bear ſome proportion to the merit of this wonderful ſacrifice; and that the effects of that divine *love, which paſſeth knowledge*, will appear as well in the greatneſs of the bliſs our Saviour has procured for them, as in the greatneſs of the ſufferings he endured to accompliſh that glorious deſign.

'Twas with this view, when he was ready to lay down his life, that he prayed ſo earneſtly to his Father, that his diſciples might be with him in that ſtate of glory to which he was to be advanced, as a reward of his ſufferings, that they might behold his glory, and partake of it: and 'twas to encourage them to believe and aſpire after ſo great a privilege, that he aſſures them of his aſcenſion, to take poſſeſſion of heaven as their forerunner, and to provide manſions of glory for them.

But I confeſs this is a very general account of a matter, which well deſerves to be more particularly diſcuſſed: I ſhall therefore conſider

ſider this ſtate of happineſs, with reference to the faculties and capacities of the ſubjects of it.

(1.) If we conſider man as an intelligent being, we can't ſuppoſe him capable of happineſs, without the gratification of his rational powers. As his perception, reaſon and judgment are faculties, which ſhew the high rank he has among the various orders of creatures, 'tis not to be conceived that he can be truly happy, unleſs theſe be agreeably entertained with proper objects, and ſecured from errors and miſtakes. Mankind is ſo ſenſible of this, that thoſe who have allowed themſelves the moſt time to think, and reflect on the dignity and capacity of their being, have expreſſed the moſt importunate deſire after knowledge and wiſdom; being convinced that a rational creature could not be happy without theſe. And when the wiſe man, in the book of Proverbs, ſo elegantly deſcribes the happineſs of thoſe who apply themſelves to acquire knowledge and underſtanding; as he ſhews thereby the excellency of religion, which is founded on principles of eternal truth and prudence; ſo he proceeds on the ſuppoſition, that 'tis impoſſible to be happy in a ſtate of error and folly.

How many great minds have undergone a multitude of inconveniences and diſadvantages, rather than they would want the ſatisfaction of improving their intellectual talents; and have with extraordinary vigor and

application purſued ſuch ſtudies, as others have accounted more dry than profitable! which however ſhews, that the knowledge even of things leſs important is deſirable; how much more the knowledge of truths of the higheſt nature and conſequence?

And if, notwithſtanding the ſmall advance the greateſt genius can make in the knowledge of truth in this world, becauſe of the ſhortneſs of human life; yet that degree of it which is attainable, has charms enow to encourage great attention and induſtry, and to make the inquirers after truth eaſily overcome the fatigue of cloſe ſtudy, and deſpiſe many temporal inconveniences which attend it, ſo as ſometimes to forget the neceſſities of their frail bodies: what pleaſure muſt the ſoul find in knowledge infinitely more extenſive and important, and attained without labour and toil, ſuch as the ſaints ſhall enjoy in heaven!

The great diſtinction we make between men in our eſteem, with reſpect to the different meaſures of wiſdom and knowledge we imagine they poſſeſs, ſhews that mankind are agreed that theſe greatly enonble our nature, and have a proper tendency to make us happy. How great then muſt be the felicity, how great the glory of the future world, where the righteous ſhall have thoſe divine truths, which are of the higheſt importance, clearly ſet before them; and their minds enlarged to perceive them diſtinctly, and without

without difficulty applied to the contemplation of them! With what joy and admiration will they be filled, when they *know as they are known*, and *see*, not *as in a glass, darkly*, or obscurely, but *clearly, and face to face* [w]!

Here we are at great uncertainties; sometimes groping intirely in the dark, and at best enjoying but some little glimmerings of light: how great will the joy of the soul be, when she comes to see truth in its native beauty, and is delivered both from the fear of mistaking, and from the uneasiness of doubting!

Some persons are very imprudent, in the choice they make of pursuing such parts of knowledge as are less valuable, and yet find no inconsiderable pleasure in such pursuits: how entertaining then must the intimate knowledge of God, of his nature, his decrees, his works and laws, be to souls qualified for the intuition of these things, which are capable of engaging the attention, and satisfying the desires of myriads of angels and men to eternity!

Our ignorance, our proneness to give into mistakes, our various prejudices, and our impatience in the research of truth, often prompt us to embrace its shadow and appearance, instead of the substance and reality: but the heavenly perfection will re-

[w] 1 Cor. 13. 12.

move from our ſouls every falſe biaſs, and intirely free us from all prepoſſeſſion and illuſion. There will be no want of time for the inveſtigation of truth, where eternity will be ſpent in that happy imployment; and this without any of thoſe avocations, which, by reaſon of the infirmities of our nature, or the neceſſities of our fellow-creatures, ſo often give us interruption.

What a tranſport of joy has the ſolution of a difficult queſtion given a philoſopher, who has before often made it the ſubject of his meditation without ſucceſs! And will not the ſouls of the righteous be ſurprized with infinite pleaſure in ſucceeding conſtantly in the diſcovery of thoſe truths, which were formerly involved in obſcurity and darkneſs; ſo as to baffle the moſt penetrating minds, and to confound the wiſe and prudent?

If men could attain much greater degrees of knowledge, than 'tis poſſible for them to do in this world, and could be ſure of eſcaping thoſe evil occurrences, which ſo often cut them off in the bloom of youth, or in the full vigor of their days; yet old age ſoon overtakes them, and makes a wonderful impreſſion on the mind as well as on the body: ſo that 'tis no uncommon thing to ſee the faculties of the ſoul, which were once ſtrong and lively, become very weak and languid; and what was acquired with much diligence and labour, is, in a great meaſure,

measure, lost during this life; so that many a man may be said to survive his learning, and even out-live his reason. But no such declension will attend the knowledge of the blessed. None of the bright ideas they have received shall be blotted from their minds, but their understandings eternally improve by the divine truths, which shall be continually exposed to their view, when they *shall be like God, and see him as he is* [x].

(2.) Let us farther consider man as a free agent, and capable of morality; and we shall find, that to make him truly and perfectly blessed, he must have a happiness suited to this part of his character, which indeed dignifies him more than all other advantages. The holiness, justice, goodness, mercy and truth of God, which are term'd his moral perfections, give us the most glorious idea of him: and since a creature is by so much the more excellent, by how much the more nearly it resembles the Creator; and since men can resemble the great God in nothing so much, as in these moral properties, in being *holy as he is holy* [y], and *merciful as he is merciful* [z]; the felicity of the saints in heaven must chiefly consist in moral perfection. It is especially, on this account, that man is said to have been created *in the image of God*; it was sin which defaced this glorious likeness, and 'tis the design of religion to

[x] 1 John 3. 2.
[y] 1 Pet. 1. 16.
[z] Luke 6. 36.

renew

renew it on the ſoul, in order to render it happy for ever.

'Tis indeed impoſſible to be happy without it; not only becauſe God has, by an irreverſible ſentence, determined, that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee him* [a]; but becauſe, in the nature of the thing, 'tis neceſſary, that the powers of the ſoul be turn'd and apply'd to their proper objects, to render her completely happy. An unnatural ſituation of the mind will be attended with uneaſineſs, which will frequently recur, notwithſtanding all the amuſements men can poſſibly invent to divert or allay it. And creatures, capable of moral agency, could not be happy, ſuppoſing they could be tranſported into heaven, while their ſouls are viciouſly inclined: for how could thoſe, who are deſtitute of the love of God, find pleaſure in the view of his perfections, the beauty of whoſe holineſs would conſtantly reproach them for the deformity of their ſin; and the ſeverity of whoſe juſtice would ſtrike ſuch terror on their guilty minds, as would ſoon convince them, they could no more ſubſiſt in his preſence, than dry ſtubble can dwell with devouring fire? Since the happineſs of rational creatures, as was juſt now obſerved, chiefly conſiſts in their likeneſs to their Creator, and in their communion with him; where there is no reſemblance, but contrary

[a] Heb. 12. 14.

incli-

inclinations, what communion can there be? *What communion hath light with darkneſs? And what concord hath Chriſt with Belial* [b]? And for the ſame reaſon, the company of ſaints and angels would render the wicked very uneaſy, if they were joined to that bleſſed ſociety; in which they could find nothing to ſooth and flatter their fooliſh prejudices and corrupt appetites, but ſuch ſentiments and diſpoſitions as would directly oppoſe and contradict them, nay, cenſure and condemn them.

The bliſs of heaven is deſcribed by a ſtate of reſt and tranquillity; while *the wicked are like the raging ſea, when it cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire and dirt* [c], as the prophet ſpeaks; and then ſolemnly repeats the ſame thing in other terms, *There is no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked.* Their ſouls are agitated with furious ſtorms, and they are ſo violently driven by impetuous appetites, and ſo diſtracted with the tumult of their contending paſſions, that if they ſeek reſt, 'tis impoſſible they ſhould find it, while they are poſſeſſed with ſuch a legion of evil ſpirits.

But as good men aſpire after nothing ſo much as a moral reſemblance of the divine Being; and as nothing makes them ſo uneaſy in this world as the want of conformity to their Maker's will, which often makes them

[b] 2 Cor. 6. 14, 15. | [c] Iſa. 57. 20, 21.

groan,

groan, and *desire to be dissolved* [d], that they may put off the body of sin, and be divested of their earthly tabernacle together; and makes each of them cry out in the language of the psalmist, *O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest* [e]; so this view of the future glory, as a state of immunity from all sin, and of a complete conformity to the will of God, is, in their account, the most glorious and agreeable that can be given. As no burden is so great to them as that of their sins, and no sorrow so pungent as that which is occasioned by the consideration of their folly and deformity; so nothing so effectually revives their drooping minds, and inspires them with so lively a joy, and so ravishing a pleasure, as the hope of their arrival at a state of perfect holiness, which they know is the highest glory of creatures, and therefore will give them the greatest joy and satisfaction.

(3.) As man is a creature capable of various appetites and affections, his happiness must be considered with reference to these, and must exclude those of them, which either suppose, or are the occasion of imperfection, misery and uneasiness; and fix the rest on their proper objects, giving them a suitable intenseness, and a constant pleasure, and that satisfaction, which gives rest to the soul.

[d] 2 Cor. 5. 1, 2, *etc.* | [e] Psal. 55. 6.

Thus

Thus the appetites of hunger and thirſt will have no room in that bleſſed ſtate, where the bodies of the ſaints ſhall not need thoſe reparations by food and drink, which their preſent infirmities require. All fear ſhall be excluded, where there ſhall be no poſſibility of danger, and where there ſhall be *perfect love*, which the apoſtle ſays, *caſts out fear*. There will be no room for anger, where there will be nothing to provoke and irritate, or give the leaſt uneaſineſs; no ſorrow, where there ſhall be no mournful ſcenes to excite that paſſion, and hope itſelf ſhall be rendered uſeleſs by the enjoyment of a complete felicity. There all deſires will be regular, and theſe will find their true and full ſatisfaction; love will be conſtantly and intenſely imployed in the view of objects infinitely lovely, and unſpeakable joy reſult from the fruition of ſubſtantial and eternal good.

(4.) This happineſs will be accommodated to mankind, as conſcious of their own thoughts and actions. Now to render creatures of ſuch a conſtitution happy, the reflections they make upon their own powers and faculties, their thoughts and ſenſations, their words and actions, muſt give them no trouble or anxiety, but, on the contrary, great delight and contentment.

The conſciouſneſs of the dignity of our nature, of the excellent faculties, talents and endowments God has been pleaſed to give us,

us, and the abuſe of theſe by what paſſes in our minds, and in our lives, by the vanity of our imaginations, the temerity and partiality of our judgments, and the irregularity of both our paſſions and actions, give us frequently a very juſt occaſion of ſhame and remorſe: whereas the reflections we make on the right uſe of the powers God has given us, and on thoſe thoughts, deſires, inclinations and actions, which we have regulated by his will, give us conſiderable pleaſure and ſatisfaction in this world, tho attended with many infirmities and imperfections. How happy then muſt the righteous be in the heavenly ſtate, when their minds ſhall be agreeably entertain'd with reflections on the powers and faculties God has given them, when rais'd to the utmoſt pitch of perfection of which they are capable! When they ſhall ſee the brighteſt traces of the divine image on their own hearts; when they ſhall feel no reluctancy to the performance of their duties, but attend them with delight and pleaſure; when they ſhall be conſcious of no vain fancy or irregular deſire, much leſs of any diſorderly action; but find themſelves continually in ſuch a condition, as infinite wiſdom and holineſs approve, always anſwering the end of their being, always acting according to the obligations which are upon them, and always finding the higheſt pleaſure and ſatisfaction in ſo doing!

As we naturally and neceſſarily love ourſelves, it can't but give us extraordinary pleaſure to find all the ſprings and movements of our ſouls in order; ſince this is what makes them truly lovely, and renders them the objects of the complacency of God, whoſe *favour is life*, and in whoſe *preſence there is fulneſs of joy*.

(5.) If we moreover take a view of man, as a creature compounded of two different kinds of being, *viz.* a ſoul and body; we ſhall find that this ſtate of reſt and happineſs, aſſign'd to the righteous, is adapted to both parts of him. How happy the ſouls of good men ſhall be, has in part been ſhewn already; but they will not attain perfect bliſs till the happy day of the reſurrection, when their bodies too ſhall participate the heavenly glory.

The body indeed is the leſs noble part of man: yet the holy Scripture aſſures us, that the bodies of the ſaints ſhall be raiſed from the duſt, and clothed with beauty and immortality; that our bleſſed Saviour *will change our vile body, that it may be faſhioned like to his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to ſubdue all things to himſelf*[f]: that tho the bodies of the ſaints are *ſown in corruption*, they ſhall *be raiſed in incorruption*; tho *ſown in diſhonour*, they ſhall *be raiſed in glory*; tho *ſown in*

[f] Phil. 3. 21.

weakneſs, they ſhall *be raiſed in power*; and that which is *ſown a natural body*, raiſed *a ſpiritual one* [g].

How glorious did the body of our Saviour appear, when transfigured, and when he ſhewed himſelf to the apoſtle John [h]! If the bodies of the ſaints are to be faſhion'd after this glorious model, we may be ſure the matter of them will be greatly purg'd and refin'd, and the form of them will be very beautiful and glorious. When this *mortal ſhall have put on immortality*, and *death ſhall be ſwallowed up in victory*, thoſe bodies which ſhall be form'd for eternity, and to be the vehicles of ſuch happy ſouls, will be every way fitted and qualified for ſuch an office, and for ſuch a duration.

(6.) As man is a ſociable creature, he ought to have agreeable ſociety, as well as other advantages, to render him completely happy: for whatever privileges ſome melancholy and ſuperſtitious fancies have affix'd to perpetual ſolitude and retirement, we have reaſon to believe the author of our being, who ſoon after the formation of the firſt man, declar'd it was *not good that he ſhould be alone* [i]. And that this declaration may be extended farther than conjugal ſociety, will appear from the faculties beſtow'd on mankind, which render them capable of doing much ſervice to each other; nay, both of

[g] 1 Cor. 15. 42, 43, 44.
[h] Rev. 1. 13, 14, &c.
[i] Gen. 2. 18.

contri-

contributing to, and partaking of various benefits only to be enjoyed in a community.

The power of communicating ideas, especially by the faculty of speech; the capacity of being affected with each others circumstances, and touch'd with each others passions; sufficiently make appear, that men were, in their original constitution, design'd for society.

'Tis true, the saints above in glory stand not in need of divers of those assistances and supports, which make society so very necessary to us here below: yet this does not hinder, but even in their blessed state, the company of their fellow-creatures, both of the same and of a superior order, may contribute to the advancement of their glory and bliss; as this will give occasion both to the exercise of their virtues, the improvement of their knowledge, and the communication of their joys. Therefore the author of this epistle describes the celestial state, in terms which give us the idea of a most glorious and happy society: *Ye are come*, says he, *to mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels: To the general assembly, and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven; and to God, the judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant* [k], &c.

[k] Heb. 12. 22, 23, 24.

And how bleſſed muſt that ſociety be, which ſhall remain for ever free from all pride and vanity, all irregular ſelf-love, all fraud and treachery, all envy and malice, all diſcord and contention, all ſuſpicion and jealouſy; and where humility and charity, ſincerity and kindneſs, peace and harmony, mutual confidence and friendſhip ſhall reign for ever!

The terms of natural and civil relation, ſuch as thoſe of brethren and friends, co-heirs and fellow-citizens, ſufficiently indicate, that the happineſs of heaven will be ſocially enjoyed: and this well agrees with the natural propenſion we have to converſation with others, as we have before obſerved. Nor will the enjoyment of communion with God hinder the ſociety of perfect creatures from being both delightful and profitable to each other, any more than our communion with him, in this imperfect ſtate, interferes with the good offices we render each other, either in the civil or religious communities to which we appertain, and with the advantage and pleaſure we reap from thence.

Laſtly, this happineſs is adapted to the condition of man, conſider'd as capable of immortality, and deſign'd by the author of his being to ſubſiſt for ever: and therefore to render men completely happy, they muſt be ſecured of the continuance of the happineſs

happineſs they enjoy; otherwiſe the greater it is in degree, the greater will be their ſollicitude and fear, leſt they ſhould be depriv'd of it, if it be precarious and uncertain. Mankind deſire not only to be happy, but to be ſo for ever: and as it is the greateſt aggravation of the miſery of the wicked in the future ſtate, that they ſhall have no reſt, but be tormented for ever and ever; ſo 'tis a mighty inhancement to the felicity of the righteous, that it ſhall continue in an uninterrupted courſe to eternity. No night ſhall draw a veil over that bright and glorious day, no cloud ſhall intercept its luſtre in the leaſt degree.

Tho the people of Iſrael enjoyed reſt and peace in the land of Canaan for a time, yet were they ſometimes invaded, and at other times led captive into foreign countries by their enemies: but *the reſt that remains to the people of God,* is perpetual in its duration, being founded on an *everlaſting covenant, ordered in all things, and ſure* [l].

To perſons, who by their guilt have deſerved *everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and the glory of his power* [m], a ſtate of indolence, or even freedom from great pain and torment, might be accounted a conſiderable indulgence. What words

[l] 2 Sam 23. 5. | [m] 2 Theſſ. 1. 9.

then can expreſs the divine mercy and bounty, which have provided ſuch a ſtate of reſt and happineſs, as we have been deſcribing, for thoſe who were once dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, tho now *riſen to newneſs of life* by Jeſus Chriſt; for thoſe who once were *not his people*, tho now dignified with the title of *the people of God*[n]! That they might be happy in every capacity, to the utmoſt extent, and to all eternity! What love and gratitude, what ſacrifices of thankſgiving, what acclamations of praiſe, what obedience ought to be offered for this unſpeakable gift, both in time and thro' eternity, by the heirs of this bliſs and partners of this glory, to him who has call'd them to glory and virtue, and made them *kings and prieſts, to reign with himſelf for ever!*

2. 'Tis time we now particularly conſider the character of the perſons who ſhall enjoy this ſtate of eternal reſt and happineſs: they are *the people of God.* 'Tis for them, for them only, and for all of them, that this glory is prepared and reſerved.

Not all who aſſume this appellation ſhall participate this happineſs; but thoſe who approve themſelves to be the people of God, by complying with the terms of his

[n] Rom. 9. 25.

covenant;

covenant: thoſe who truly believe, *ſhall enter into this reſt*, while thoſe only who make an empty profeſſion of the truth, and *hold it in unrighteouſneſs*, ſhall fall ſhort of it by their unbelief; as the carcaſſes of thoſe Iſraelites, who called themſelves the people of God, and yet *dealt treacherouſly in his covenant*, and provoked him by their unbelief, fell in the wilderneſs. All the judgments which *happened to them were for examplei*, and *are written for our inſtruction, upon whom the ends of the world are come* [o]. Not all who call our Saviour *Lord, Lord*, ſhall be admitted to the marriage-ſupper of the Lamb; the anſwer he makes to ſome of them, is, *Verily I ſay unto you, I know you not* [p]. With the diſobedient he thus expoſtulates; *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I ſay* [q]? But *bleſſed are they who do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in thro' the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and ſorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters; and whoſoever loveth and maketh a lye* [r].

We have before obſerved, that none but thoſe, to whom the title of the people of God juſtly belongs, are capable of this hap-

[o] 1 Cor. 10. 11.
[p] Mat. 25. 11, 12.
[q] Luke 6. 46.
[r] Rev. 22. 14, 15.

pineſs; none but they have a temper of ſoul, which *makes them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the ſaints in light* [r]; none but they can reliſh the refin'd and pure joys of paradiſe, which are admirably adapted to the deſires of their holy ſouls, which have been ſo effectually attracted by the grace of God, that, like the trembling needle touch'd by the loadſtone, they can find no reſt, but in fixing on the beloved object, who firſt gave them that powerful impreſſion.

And as none but the people of God ſhall enjoy this high privilege, ſo not one of them ſhall be deprived of it; not one of the little ones, who believe in our bleſſed Saviour, will be neglected or over-look'd by him. He is the good ſhepherd, who will loſe none of the ſheep committed to his charge: he can never *forget* his people, ſince *he has engraven them on the palms of his hands*, and their *walls are continually before him* [s]. He will not forget *their work of faith, and labour of love* [t]; not ſo much as *a cup of cold water*, given to any one of his diſciples, *in the name of a diſciple*, ſhall *loſe its reward* [u].

3. Let us now, in the laſt place, conſider the certainty of this reſt, intimated by its

[r] Col. 1. 12.
[s] Iſa. 49. 16.
[t] Heb. 6. 10.
[u] Mat. 10. 42.

remaining

remaining to the people of God. Even natural religion gives ſome light into this matter, and ſhews, that *verily there is a reward for the righteous*; *verily there is a God who judgeth in the earth* [v]. But divine revelation gives a better hope, a firmer aſſurance, and a more explicit and particular diſcovery of it. This glorious ſtate of reſt is ſecured to the righteous by the divine promiſe; by the word, and by the oath of that God, who is truth itſelf, and for whom *'tis impoſſible to lye*, that we *might have ſtrong conſolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope ſet before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the ſoul, both ſure and ſtedfaſt*; *and which enters into that within the veil, whither the fore-runner is for us entered*; *even Jeſus, made a high prieſt for ever, after the order of Melchizedek* [w]. What greater aſſurance can we have of any thing than the divine promiſe? ſince the word of God is more ſtable than the heavens and the earth; theſe may fail, but his *word abideth for ever.* The time will come, when *the heavens ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe, and the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat*; when *the earth alſo, and the works that are therein, ſhall be burnt up. Nevertheleſs we*, according to his promiſe, *look for new heavens, and a new earth,*

[v] Pſal. 58. 11. | [w] Heb. 6. 18, 19, 20.

wherein dwelleth righteouſneſs [x]. When the world ſhall be delug'd with fire, as it was formerly with water, the new Jeruſalem ſhall receive and ſecure the people of God, as the ark did then the family of righteous Noah. Tho this *earth and heaven will be ſhaken*, there are things *that cannot be ſhaken*, but muſt *remain* [y]; there's *a kingdom that cannot be moved*, but will abide for ever [z].

Since a *new and living way* is *conſecrated* for us, *thro' the veil of* our Saviour's *fleſh*, and himſelf is eſtabliſhed *a high prieſt over the houſe of God*, we may *draw near with a true heart, in full aſſurance of faith* —— And ought to *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering*, ſeeing *he is faithful who hath promiſed* [a]. Thoſe who believe, have now acceſs by faith to the throne of Chriſt in heaven; and derive thoſe graces and favours thence, which are the pledges of the future glory they expect, when their perſons ſhall take poſſeſſion of the regions of bliſs. In the mean time he lives and reigns there as their head and repreſentative; and will not fail to give them that celeſtial inheritance, which he purchaſed for them at the ineſtimable price of his blood, and by the proſpect of which he

[x] 2 Pet. 3. 10, 13.
[y] Heb. 12. 27.
[z] Ver. 28.
[a] Heb. 10. 20, 21, 22, 23.

encourages

encourages them to perſiſt in the ways of truth and holineſs, till they *receive the end of their faith, even the ſalvation of their ſouls* [b].

Add to this, that our bleſſed Redeemer aſcended to this glorious place in the view of his diſciples; and ſoon gave ample proofs of the high ſtation he has there, and of his extenſive authority over the univerſe, by the diſtribution of extraordinary and miraculous gifts, as the firſt fruits of that glory, the harveſt of which is hereafter to be expected: ſo that it would argue great weakneſs and ingratitude, ſo much as to doubt of the certainty of this *reſt which remains to the people of God.*

Thus have I diſpatch'd the ſeveral things I propos'd particularly to diſcourſe on, and now ſhall make a few reflections upon the whole.

1. If ſuch a ſtate of reſt remains to the people of God, how much does it concern us to be of that happy number, to be *written*, or enroll'd, *among the living in Jeruſalem* [c], as the prophet ſpeaks? When the moſt haughty and pompous titles, which diſtinguiſh ſome men from their fellow-creatures in civil ſociety, ſhall vaniſh and come to nothing; and when all temporal

[b] 1 Pet. 1. 9. [c] Iſa. 4. 3.

relation,

relation, with its conſequences, ſhall ceaſe, and men of high and low degree, kindred and aliens, be reduced to one common level; 'twill then be of the higheſt conſequence to be numbered among the people of God, to be own'd for his friends and favourites, and to be counted among his children, whom our Saviour will not be *aſhamed* to acknowledge for his *brethren* [d].

How little ſoever this title of *the people of God* is eſteem'd at preſent by thoſe who idolize the honours of this world, an extraordinary value will be put upon it by men of all degrees at the laſt day: but a mere pretence to this character will not ſuffice at the general judgment, as appears by our Saviour's repreſentation of the proceſs of that awful day. *When once*, ſays he, *the maſter of the houſe is riſen up, and hath ſhut to the door, and ye begin to ſtand without, and to knock at the door, ſaying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he ſhall anſwer, and ſay unto you, I know you not, whence you are: then ſhall you begin to ſay, We have eaten and drank in thy preſence, and thou haſt taught in our ſtreets. But he ſhall ſay, I tell you, I know you not, whence you are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity. There ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth, when you ſhall ſee Abraham, and*

[d] Heb. 2. 11.

Iſaac,

Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out [e], &c. 'Tis therefore of the utmost consequence that we have a just claim to this title. Nor is it difficult to know whether we are of the number of the people of God, if we will seriously inquire into the matter: for, as has been shewn before, none may truly be so called but those who believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, when 'tis exposed to them; nor is it sufficient to give credit to it in a general and confus'd manner, but so as effectually to engage us to embrace the terms of salvation proposed in it. And a faith of this kind will prove itself genuine, by *bringing forth the fruits of righteousness*; and will work by love, which is *the bond of perfection* [f]. To examine ourselves strictly on this head, is necessary, lest we fatally deceive ourselves with a *name to live*, while *we are dead* [g]; and with a *form of godliness*, while we *deny the power of it* [h].

2. How should this disengage the affections of those who find themselves dignified with this character, and with the privileges belonging to it, from this world, and the things of it; and dispose them to *seek the things which are above, where Christ*

[e] Luke 13. 25——28.
[f] Col. 3. 14.
[g] Rev. 3. 1.
[h] 2 Tim. 3. 5.

sitteth

ſitteth at the right hand of God [i] ! How juſt is it that their hearts ſhould be where their treaſure is !

What is there to be found in this world, but vanity and vexation of ſpirit ? as the wiſe man has long ſince obſerved. What wonder then, if good men, in this ſtate of pilgrimage, like the dove which wandered from the ark, can find no reſt for the ſoles of their feet ?

If the ſame inquiry were made after reſt and happineſs, as is repreſented in the book of Job, to be made after wiſdom and underſtanding, the ſame anſwer might be returned : *Man knoweth not the price thereof, neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth ſaith, It is not in me ; and the ſea ſaith, It is not in me. It can't be gotten for gold, neither ſhall ſilver be weighed for the price of it. It cannot be valued with the gold of ophir, with the precious onyx, or the ſaphir* [k], &c. But *God underſtands the way thereof, and he knows the place of it* [l], &c.

Let us not then ſeek happineſs in this world, where it is not to be found ; for why ſhould we ſeek the living among the dead ? But let us turn our eyes towards that celeſtial country where our Saviour reſides, and direct our courſe towards that

[i] Col. 3. 1, 2.
[k] Job 28. 12——16.
[l] Ver. 23.

heavenly

heavenly Jeruſalem, of which we profeſs to be citizens.

3. The proſpect of this ſtate of eternal reſt and happineſs, may ſerve to comfort good men under all the afflictions and ſorrows which attend them in this world, and alſo to juſtify the divine government, in the unequal diſtribution of temporal good and evil in the preſent ſtate of things; which ſometimes has been ready to ſhock wiſe and pious men. *As for me*, ſays the pſalmiſt, *my feet were almoſt gone, my ſteps had well nigh ſlipped. For I was envious at the fooliſh, when I ſaw the proſperity of the wicked* [m]. *They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagu'd like other men* [n], &c. *Behold theſe are the ungodly, who proſper in the world; they increaſe in riches. Verily I have cleanſed my heart in vain, and waſhed my hands in innocence: for all the day long have I been plagu'd, and chaſten'd every morning* [o].

When 'tis conſidered, that the joy and pleaſure of wicked men are but for a moment, mixed with trouble and remorſe here, and will be followed with endleſs torments in the future world; and that the many troubles which ſometimes befal the beſt of men, ſhall ſerve to purify and refine their ſouls, and to prepare them for eternal life

[m] Pſal. 73. 2, 3.
[n] Ver. 5.
[o] Ver. 12, 13, 14.

and

and glory, and to inhance their reward, they may well be reconciled to the moſt ſevere diſcipline of divine providence: *Their light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* [p]. Tho they now *ſow in tears, they ſhall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious ſeed, ſhall doubtleſs come again with rejoicing, bringing his ſheaves with him* [q].

4. This ſhould fortify the minds of good men againſt the terrors of death. That which renders death ſo very terrible, is the guilt of our ſouls; therefore the apoſtle ſays, *the ſting of death is ſin* [r]. When 'tis conſidered as the effect and puniſhment of ſin, and that which leads men to the tribunal of the Almighty, to receive an irreverſible ſentence according to their works, it has a dreadful aſpect indeed. But if this ſting be taken away, if our conſciences are ſprinkled with *the blood of* Chriſt, *which cleanſes from all ſin* [s], and we are reconciled to God by the croſs of our Redeemer; if, *being juſtified freely by his grace, we have peace with God*, we may look into the valley of the ſhadow of death without fearing any evil, ſeeing 'tis to the righteous the way to eternal life and glory. Death

[p] 2 Cor. 4. 17.
[q] Pſal. 126. 5, 6.
[r] 1 Cor. 15. 56.
[s] 1 John 1. 7.

will

will deliver them from all the fears and dangers, the cares and troubles, the ſorrows and pains to which they are liable at preſent; and give them an entrance into that glorious reſt which has been deſcribed to you; into thoſe calm and bright regions, which are never ruffled by ſtorms and tempeſts, nor ſullied by clouds and darkneſs: where miſery and pain can have no place, becauſe there's no room for ſin and guilt; but where perfect holineſs and perfect happineſs ſhall keep equal pace to eternity.

The view of this reſt has made many chriſtians, who, on other occaſions, ſeem'd to have no great courage or preſence of mind, triumph over the grave, when they have found themſelves dropping into it.

It was this glorious proſpect which ſupported the ſoul of that reverend perſon, whoſe death we ſo juſtly lament, and whoſe life muſt needs render his memory ever fragrant to us: it was this inſpired him with patience and ſubmiſſion, conſtancy and joy, during a tedious ſickneſs, and at the very article of death.

And ſince there are divers things relating both to his life and death, which were very exemplary and edifying; I perſuade myſelf it will be thought very ſeaſonable for me, now to give a brief account of ſome paſſages worthy to be remarked in both.

That

That might justly be said of him, which the apostle says of his son Timothy, that *from a child he knew the holy scriptures*, and that these *made him wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus*[1]. The great delight he then had in hearing the joyful sound of the gospel, made him frequent divers religious assemblies, and that not without some hazard, at a time when they were often disturbed and interrupted, and sometimes assaulted with violence, while they were worshipping God according to the dictates of their consciences.

Some of the sermons which he heard in those assemblies, made a deep and lasting impression on his mind; and his early conversion to God was attended with an earnest desire to be employed in the work of the ministry.

This inclination grew so strong and urgent, that nothing could dissuade him from his design, of serving God in this publick capacity. To this purpose he applied himself to those studies, which he thought most conducive to the end he had in view; and that with so much diligence and success, that in a little time his *profiting appeared to all*, and at length he approved himself *a workman, that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*[2].

[1] 2 Tim. 3. 15. [2] 2 Tim. 2. 15.

God,

God, who inclined his heart to this work, and called him to it, had endowed him with divers conſiderable talents to prepare him for it. He had a ſolid judgment as well as a lively fancy, and quickneſs of thought as well as facility of expreſſion. His ſtrong and muſical voice, together with that agreeable mixture of gravity and ſweetneſs, which reign'd in his countenance, tended to make way for the truths and reaſons he delivered, by awakening the attention, and engaging the affections of his auditors. He taught with clearneſs, and argu'd with ſtrength; exhorted with vehemence, and reprov'd with a becoming authority; and found the art, which ſo few who ſpeak in publick attain, of blending reaſon and eloquence ſo happily together, that they mutually aſſiſted and embelliſhed each other, and equally adorned his diſcourſes; which were adapted at once to improve the mind, and touch the heart, and had ſomething in them which was entertaining both to the learned and illiterate, both to the polite, and leſs cultivated part of mankind.

Tho what I now ſpeak, can give but a faint idea of his excellent gifts to ſome of this audience; yet I doubt not that it raiſes in the minds of thoſe, who were wont to hear him, a lively remembrance of the manner of his preaching, and muſt needs make them reflect on the great loſs the publick

has ſuſtain'd by his death, at an age which ſeem'd to give room to hope, that the world might have reap'd yet much more advantage by his labours.

His great improvement, next to the divine bleſſing on his aſſiduous ſtudies, was owing partly to the generous ambition he had to excel; which induced him to apply himſelf to cloſe ſtudy and meditation, leſt he ſhould produce any thing crude and undigeſted; partly to the prudent choice he made in his younger days, to converſe with men not only of ſenſe and learning, but of a polite genius too; and partly to his great modeſty, which gave him a continual jealouſy of his own performances, and engag'd him frequently to ſubmit what he had compos'd, to the cenſure of thoſe friends he thought capable of adviſing him; and to intreat them, with uncommon importunity, not to ſuffer any faults to eſcape their remark, but to be free in advertiſing him of every thing which might ſeem to them either defective or redundant. And indeed he would be eaſily convinced of any over-ſight or miſtake, and gratefully acknowledge the kindneſs of any one who pointed it out to him. Which ſhew'd this did not ariſe from a vain affectation of modeſty, but from his humility, and the real diffidence he had of himſelf. And indeed he deſerved the critical ſeverity of his friends, in knowing how to value

value that ſort of kindneſs, and in receiving the hints and intimations they gave him after ſo obliging a manner.

Nay, this humble and happy temper adhered to him even to the laſt; ſo that he could not be eaſy in publiſhing any thing to the world, without firſt conſulting ſome of his particular friends. Which I the rather take notice of, to recommend to ſuch young miniſters, as are preſent in this aſſembly, the imitation of ſo profitable an example: for 'tis not to be doubted that they would find their account in it, nay, that it would mightily contribute to their improvement, to uſe the ſame method; if they have but the good ſenſe to expoſe their compoſitions to perſons capable of obſerving to them their miſtakes, and have humility enough to hearken to the advice of thoſe who are able to inform them.

It was none of the leaſt of this excellent man's qualifications for the miniſterial work, that he knew how to *behave himſelf in the church of God*, in regard of the exerciſe of that diſcipline which is ſo neceſſary to chriſtian ſocieties. Many here preſent know, with what patience and meekneſs, with what gravity and prudence, with what impartiality and faithfulneſs he demean'd himſelf in this congregation, and with what prudence and conduct he manag'd its affairs upon all occaſions.

His good will and charity to mankind in general, was conſpicuous in the indefatigable labours he ſuſtained, in endeavouring to promote the intereſt of their ſouls. He often lamented the unreaſonable differences among chriſtians, and had a hearty reſpect for all who held the eſſentials of the chriſtian religion, tho of different ſentiments in matters of leſſer moment: and as he had a mind too generous to be determined by the opinion of others, without making a ſtrict inquiry into the reaſons of things; ſo his modeſty and charity were too great, not to give all due deference to thoſe who entertained notions, which he could not ſee reaſon to embrace. And whereas he thought it his duty frequently to expoſe the errors of thoſe of the Romiſh communion, in terms of ſome force and warmth, he deſired it might be ſignified to the world, after his deceaſe, that the zeal and fervour he ſhewed on thoſe occaſions, did not ariſe from a diſaffection to any of their perſons, but from the deep ſenſe he had of the pernicious tendency of their errors, and from the ardent deſire he had to reclaim them from thoſe deluſions, as well as to prevent others from falling into them.

He was not only ſerviceable to this congregation, but uſeful to many others: and tho his labours were chiefly beſtowed on you, yet his *praiſe was in the goſpel thro'out* many

many other *churches* [u], to whom he occaſionally preached, and whom he aſſiſted with his advice in many exigencies.

That piety and charity which adorned his converſation in the time of his health, ſeemed to increaſe their ſtrength and luſtre during his long ſickneſs; a ſickneſs which gradually weakened his conſtitution, and at laſt grew ſtrong enough to diſſolve it. I can't forbear to think, that his extraordinary labour in the miniſterial work, laid the foundation of his ſickneſs; for ſuch was the fervency of his ſpirit, that it often raiſed the tone of his voice to ſuch a pitch, as could not but exhauſt his animal ſpirits to a very great degree, and muſt needs, at length, bring great weakneſs upon him. He was a *burning and a ſhining light* [v], in which we rejoiced for a ſeaſon; but how ſoon is this light extinguiſhed! He was *glad to ſpend and be ſpent* for you [w], for the ſervice of your faith, and for the furtherance of your joy.

I muſt not omit to take notice to you, how edifying his converſation was in the time of his ſickneſs, and how difficult it was to reſtrain him from exhauſting the little ſtrength he had left, in giving ſerious exhortations to thoſe who came to viſit him. Not content with this, he deſired many

[u] 2 Cor. 8. 18.
[v] John 5. 35.
[w] 2 Cor. 12. 15.

perſons to be ſent for, whom either the ties of friendſhip and acquaintance had endeared to him, or whom he had obſerved to attend his miniſtry, without knowing what effect it had upon their ſouls, or thoſe with whom he knew God had intruſted conſiderable talents, that he might earneſtly recommend to them the improvement of time, in order to their eternal felicity.

He obſerved to them, that religion was a real thing, and of the greateſt importance of all others; that they might well believe him to be in earneſt in what he ſaid, ſince he was going to die, and to give up his accounts to God. He aſſured them, he had not *followed cunningly deviſed fables*, nor preached for *filthy lucre* [x]; but that his *rejoicing was in the teſtimony of* his *conſcience*, that *in ſimplicity, and godly ſincerity* [y], he had exerciſed his miniſterial function: that he had taught the *truth as it is in Jeſus*, according to the beſt of his judgment; and that he rely'd on the ſame doctrine he had publiſh'd to others, for the ſalvation of his own ſoul. He preſſed them with all the earneſtneſs imaginable to conſult the intereſt of their ſouls, and to improve the ſeveral advantages God had put into their hands for this purpoſe; and this in ſuch pathetick language, and in ſo affecting a manner, that

[x] 2 Pet. 1. 16. | [y] 2 Cor. 1. 12.

it

it could not but make an impreſſion on all who were preſent, and drew abundance of tears from their eyes. I would fain hope, a laſting impreſſion is made on the hearts, at leaſt of divers perſons, to whom he particularly addreſſed his dying words. God grant, that a death which has coſt us ſo dear, and given us ſo acute a ſorrow, may be the occaſion of the ſpiritual life of many ſouls, and cauſe joy both in heaven and on earth.

During the time of his tedious illneſs, God was pleaſed highly to favour him, in continuing to him the exerciſe of his reaſon, and in viſiting him with the light of his countenance; ſo that it might be ſaid of him, as of the bleſſed man deſcribed by the pſalmiſt, *The Lord ſtrengthened him on the bed of languiſhing*, and *made all his bed in his ſickneſs* [z]. He was generally in a humble, patient and reſign'd poſture of mind, neither chuſing life nor death; or to uſe his own expreſſion, *neither aſham'd to live, nor afraid to die:* for he knew, that *whether he lived, he lived unto the Lord; and whether he died, he died unto the Lord; and that whether he lived or died, he was the Lord's* [a]: that *Chriſt would be magnified in him, whether by life or by death; and therefore to him to live was Chriſt, and to die was gain* [b].

[z] Pſal. 41. 3.
[a] Rom. 14. 8.
[b] Phil. 1. 20, 21.

So

So far as I, who converſed intimately with him, could perceive, or have learned from others who attended him, his faith and hope were vigorous and lively; he had great peace and tranquillity in his conſcience, and ſometimes joy unſpeakable and full of glory, eſpecially towards the cloſe of his days: for he ſeemed to improve in the heavenly frame of his mind, as he drew near the heavenly ſtate; and a little before his exit, declared that his work in this world was finiſhed; and that now he had nothing more to do, but to reſign his ſoul into the arms of his Redeemer; which he was heard to do juſt before he expired, ſaying, *Come, Lord Jeſus! Come quickly!*

So lived and ſo died this eminent ſervant of God, whoſe memory is bleſſed, and will be precious in the account of all who knew the excellent gifts and abilities God was pleaſed to beſtow on him.

The remembrance of theſe, and of the virtues and graces which ſhone in him, juſtly aggravate our ſorrow; and it would argue ſtupidity, not to mourn on ſuch an occaſion as this. The loſs of ſo well qualified a miniſter, and of ſo faithful a friend, may well afflict us deeply. Yet are we not to *mourn* as thoſe *who have no hope* [c], becauſe we have reaſon to conclude that he is entered into

[c] 1 Theſſ. 4. 13.

ever-

everlasting rest, and has gained infinitely by dying. It will be well, if the grief occasioned by his decease become a godly sorrow, by a just application of our thoughts to the voice of God's providence, which speaks so loudly to us in this severe affliction.

May you, who are members of this congregation, remember how he *watched over you in the Lord* for the space of about twenty years, and how *he ceased not to warn you night and day with tears* [d]; may you *follow* his *faith, considering the end of his conversation* [e]. Ask counsel by your prayers, of the great *shepherd and bishop of your souls* [f], in all your difficulties; resign yourselves to his conduct, and beg earnestly that he would give you another *pastor according to his own heart*, who may *feed you with knowledge and understanding* [g]. Remember particularly, the pressing exhortations your late minister so often made you, to continue unanimous, and to cultivate charity and brotherly love among yourselves; that God may still extend the wing of his protection over you, and provide for the necessities of your souls; that he may *bless the provision of his house, and satisfy the poor with bread* [h]. And con-

[d] Acts 20. 31.
[e] Heb. 13. 7.
[f] 1 Pet. 2. 25.
[g] Jer. 3. 15.
[h] Psal. 132. 15.

stantly

ſtantly regard the bleſſed hope which is ſet before you, that *reſt which remains to the people of God. So run that ye may obtain* [i]; ſo labour that ye may *enter into this reſt*; that you may rejoice together with your paſtor in the day of the Lord, when the many ſouls converted and edified by his miniſtry, ſhall be his *crown*, his *glory*, and *joy* [k]; when he ſhall ſurrender his charge to the great ſhepherd, ſaying, *Lord, here am I, and the children thou haſt given me.*

All who knew the value of this great and good man, muſt needs partake of the common ſorrow which his death has occaſioned: but what words can expreſs the piercing grief of one, who is left in the ſolitary ſtate of widowhood by ſo tender a husband! and with what compaſſion ſhould we addreſs our prayers to *the father of mercies, and God of all conſolation*, to ſupport her under this heavy ſtroke, and to teach her a becoming ſubmiſſion to his will in ſo trying a caſe? a caſe which calls loudly for our commiſeration, and may well make her cry out with the ſaddeſt accent of ſorrow, *Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends! for the hand of God hath touched me* [l]. Yet let not her ſor-

[i] 1 Cor. 9. 24.
[k] Phil. 4. 1. 1 Theſſ. 2. 20.
[l] Job 19. 21.

rowful

rowful ſoul utterly refuſe to be comforted, ſince it ought to be accounted a favour of divine providence, to have been related to ſo valuable a perſon; and ſince it has pleaſed God, for the mitigation of her trouble, to give her the ſatisfaction of obſerving his chriſtian behaviour during his long ſickneſs, and of hearing ſo often the gracious words which proceeded from him; ſo as to give her juſt reaſon to believe, his righteous ſoul is now in a happy ſtate, waiting for the reſurrection of his body, while ſhe has good hope, thro' grace, in a little time, to enter by the ſame ſteps into that reſt which he has already attained.

To conclude: Let us all account ourſelves pilgrims and ſtrangers here, as the patriarchs did; and as ſuch, let us *abſtain from fleſhly luſts, which war againſt the ſoul* [m]. Let us make it appear that we are in queſt of a better country, by withdrawing our affections from this world, and fixing them *on the things above.* Let us keep the eye of our faith intent on that *kingdom which cannot be removed*; and let us be conſtantly doing our Lord's will, that whenever he ſhall call us hence, being found ſo doing, we may enter into this ſtate of joy

[m] 1 Pet. 2. 11.

and

and rest, which *remains to the people of God; whither Christ, our fore-runner, is* already *entered,* and into which he will receive all those who *love and wait for his appearance.*

The end of the first VOLUME.

John Davies